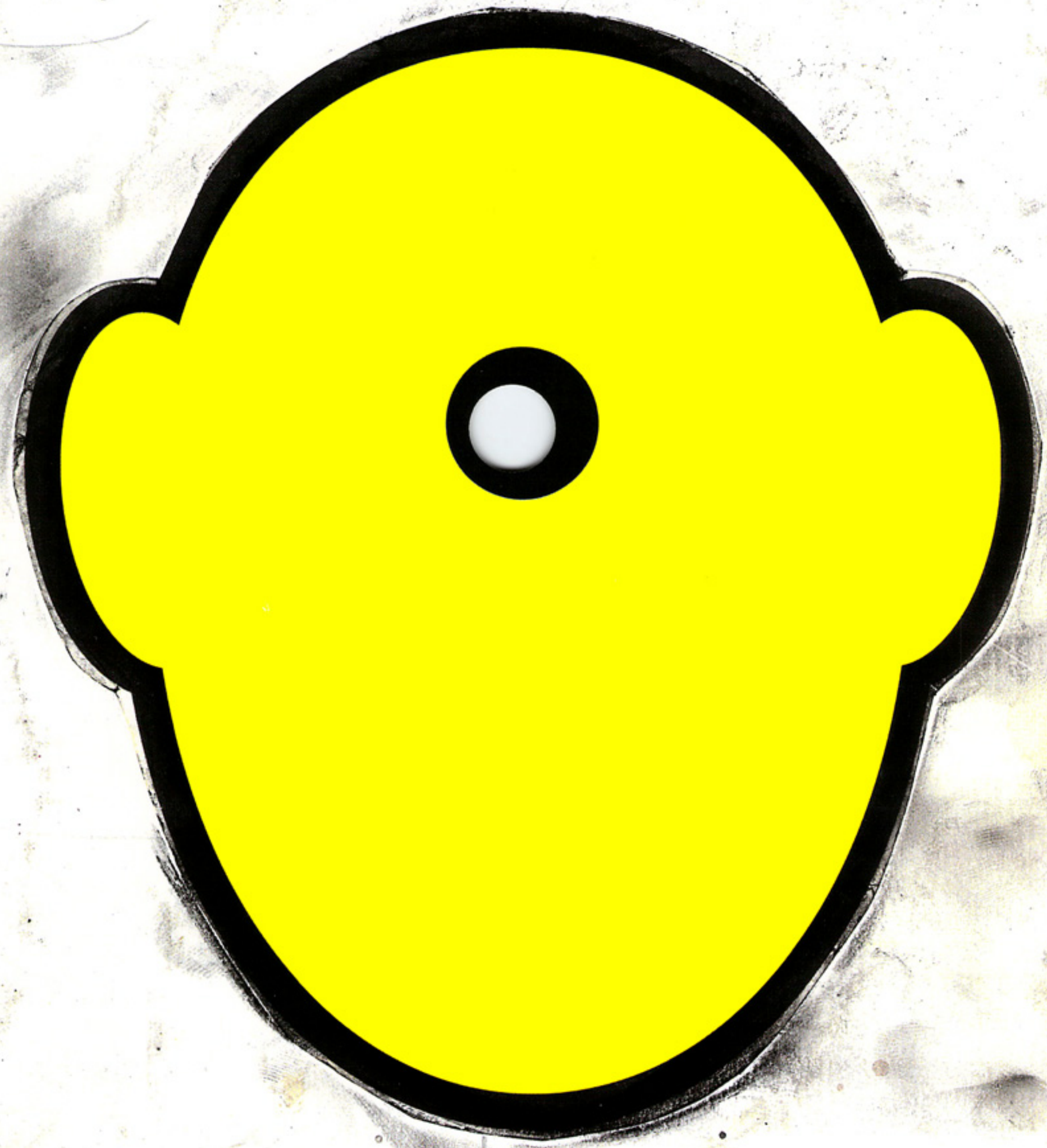
ADBUSTERS

Journal of the MENTAL ENVIRONMENT >> JAN/FEB 2004 >> NO 51



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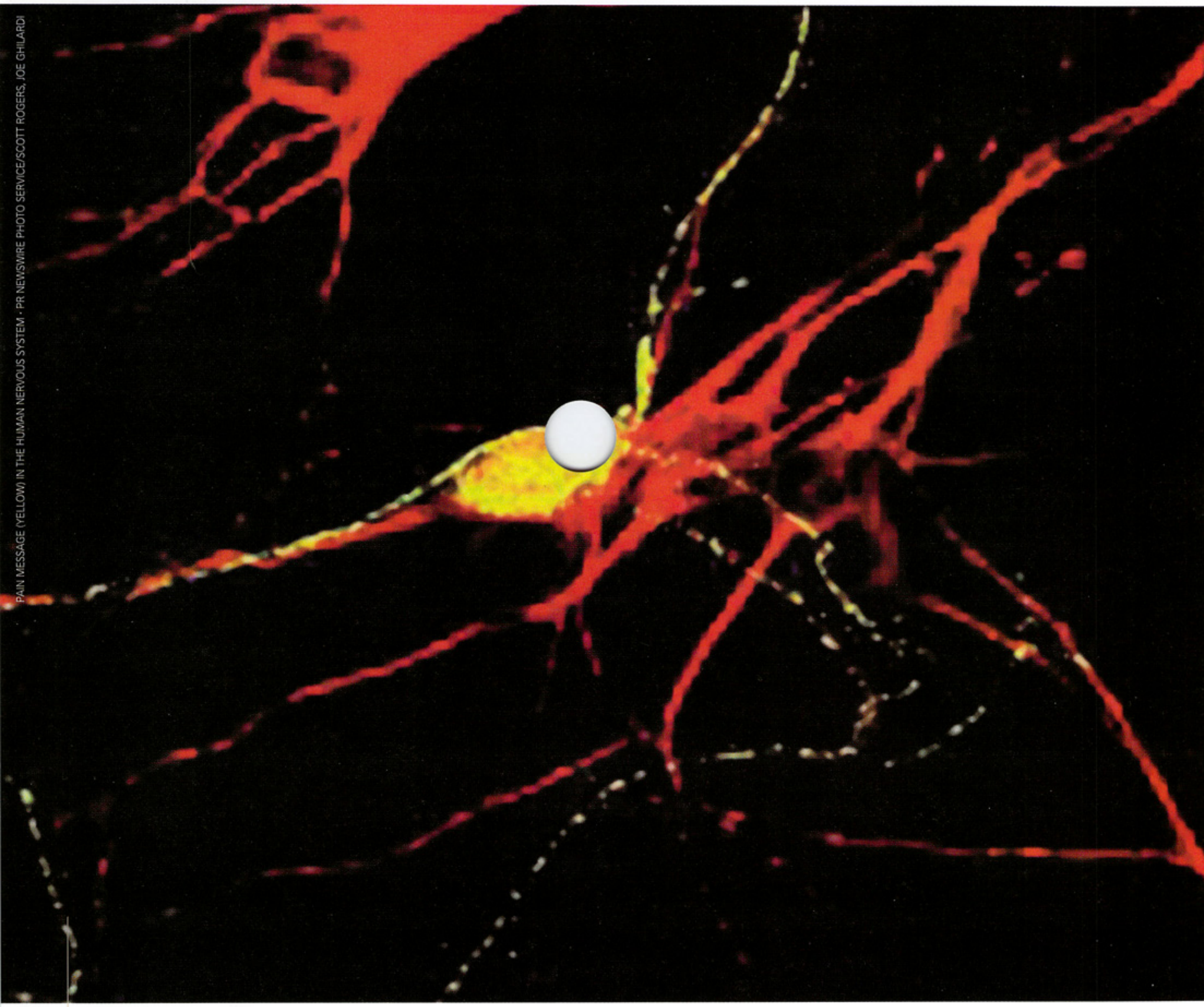
VOL. 12 NO. 1 JAN/FEB 2004

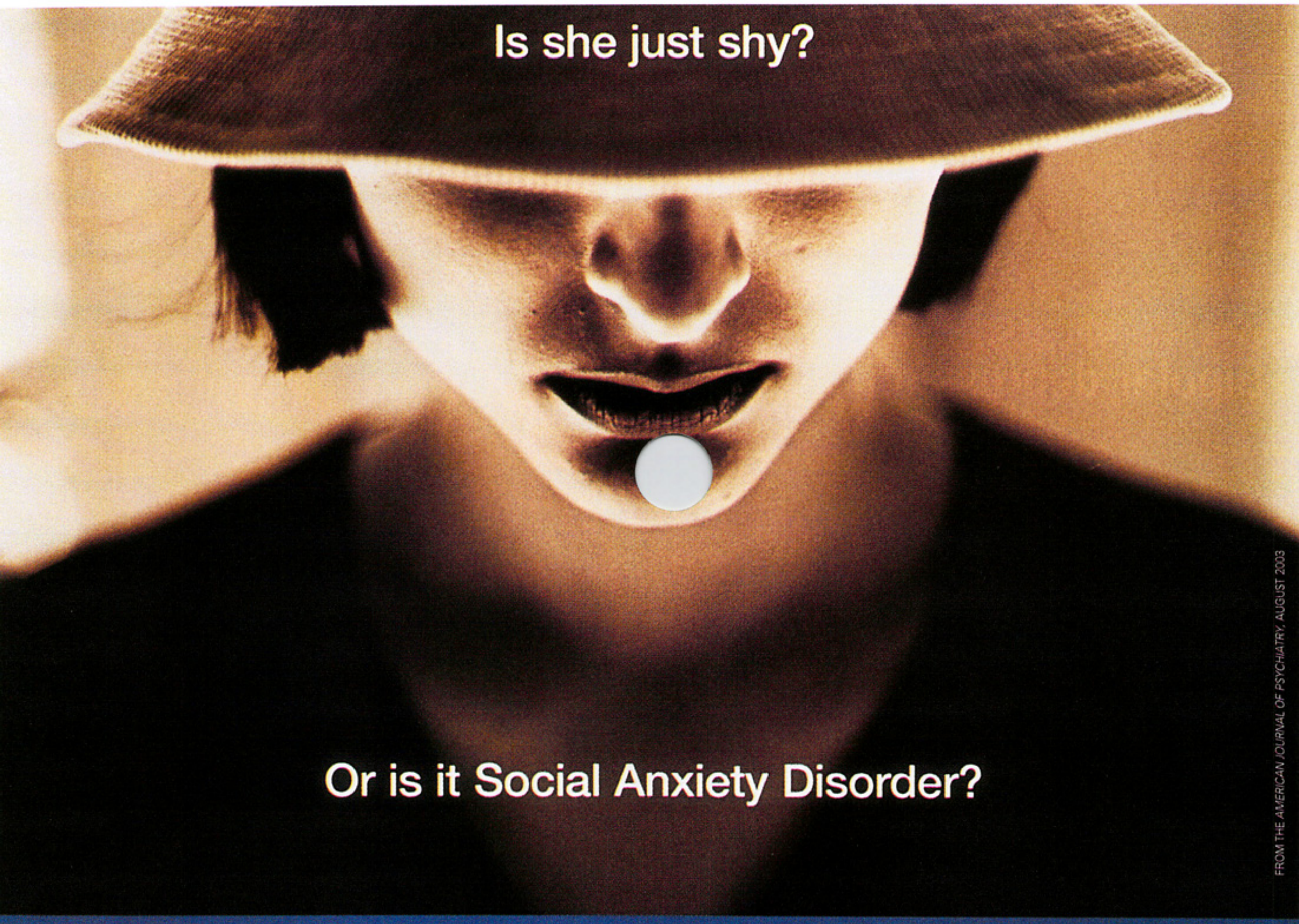
Systematically Distorted Information

Claire's
SAFEWAY
KISSES
MILLERS OUTPOST
EXPRESS
McWhorter's
Lanyard Fun
BEAD MAKER
BETH YARNELL EDWARDS



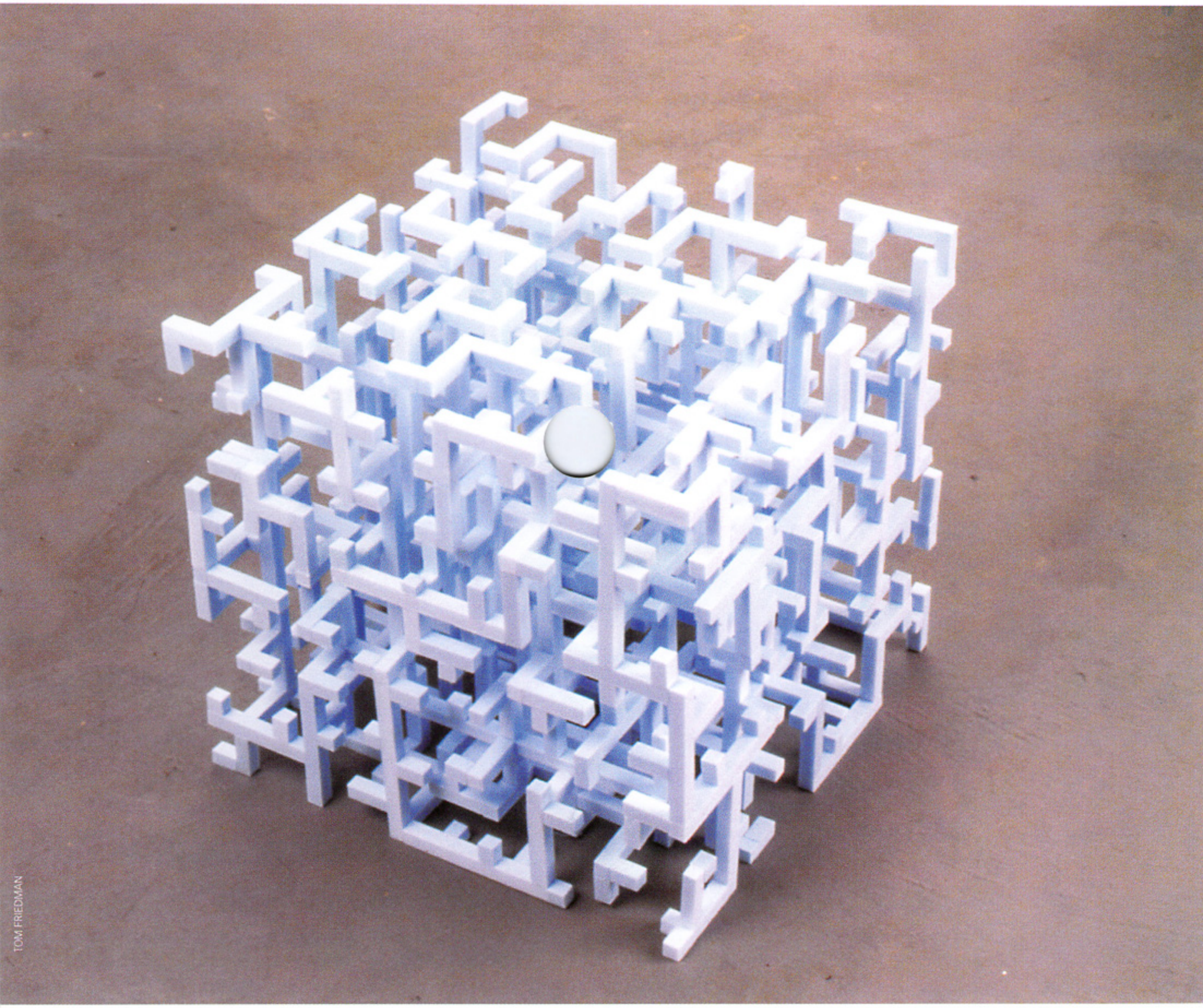
PAIN MESSAGE (YELLOW) IN THE HUMAN NERVOUS SYSTEM · PR NEWSWIRE PHOTO SERVICE/SCOTT ROGERS, JOE GHILARDI

There's a hole in your head...

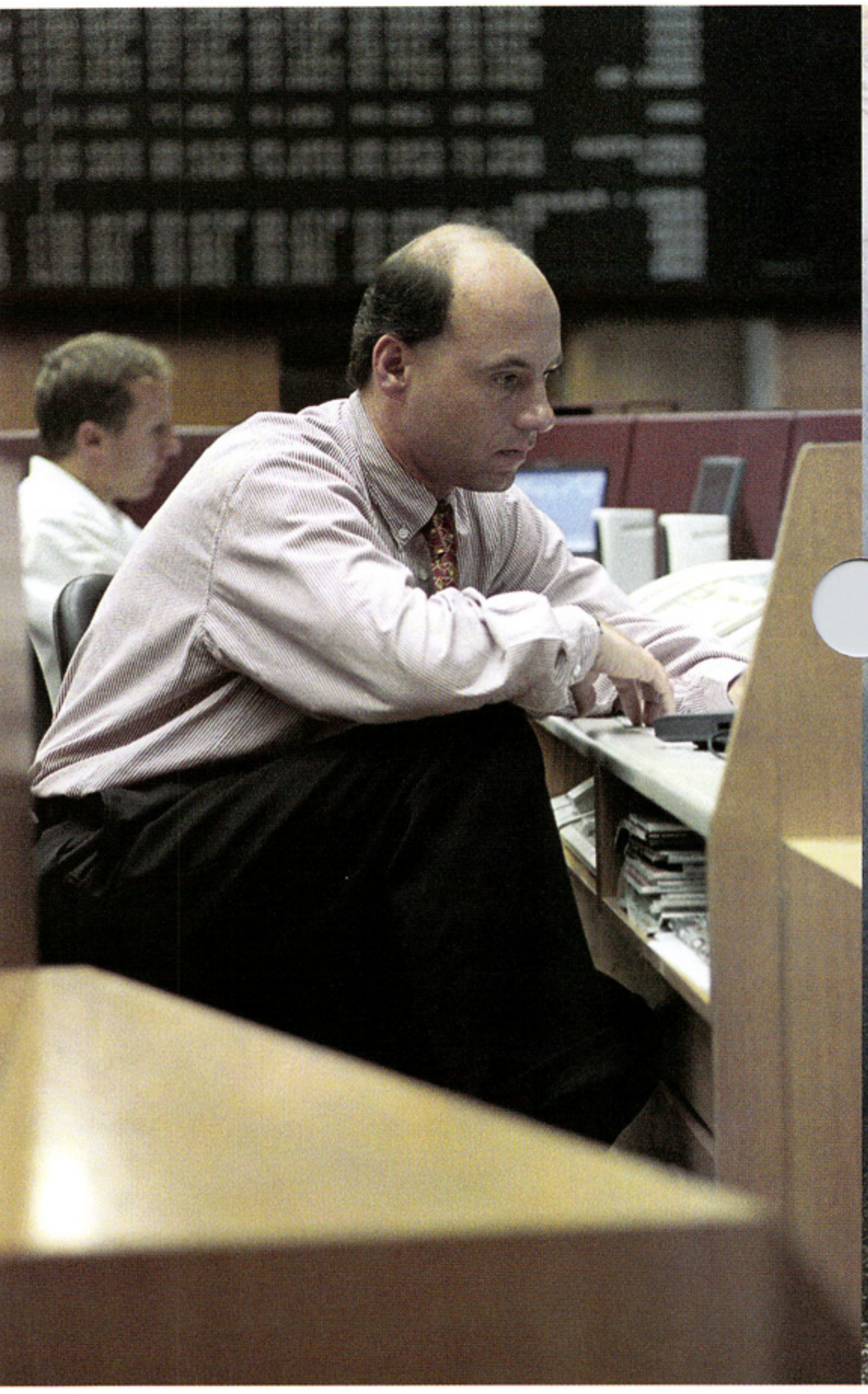

Is she just shy?
Or is it Social Anxiety Disorder?
ZOLOFT
NOW Indicated for Social Anxiety Disorder
FROM THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PSYCHIATRY, AUGUST 2003

but don't worry...

For 20,000 generations we lived in nature.



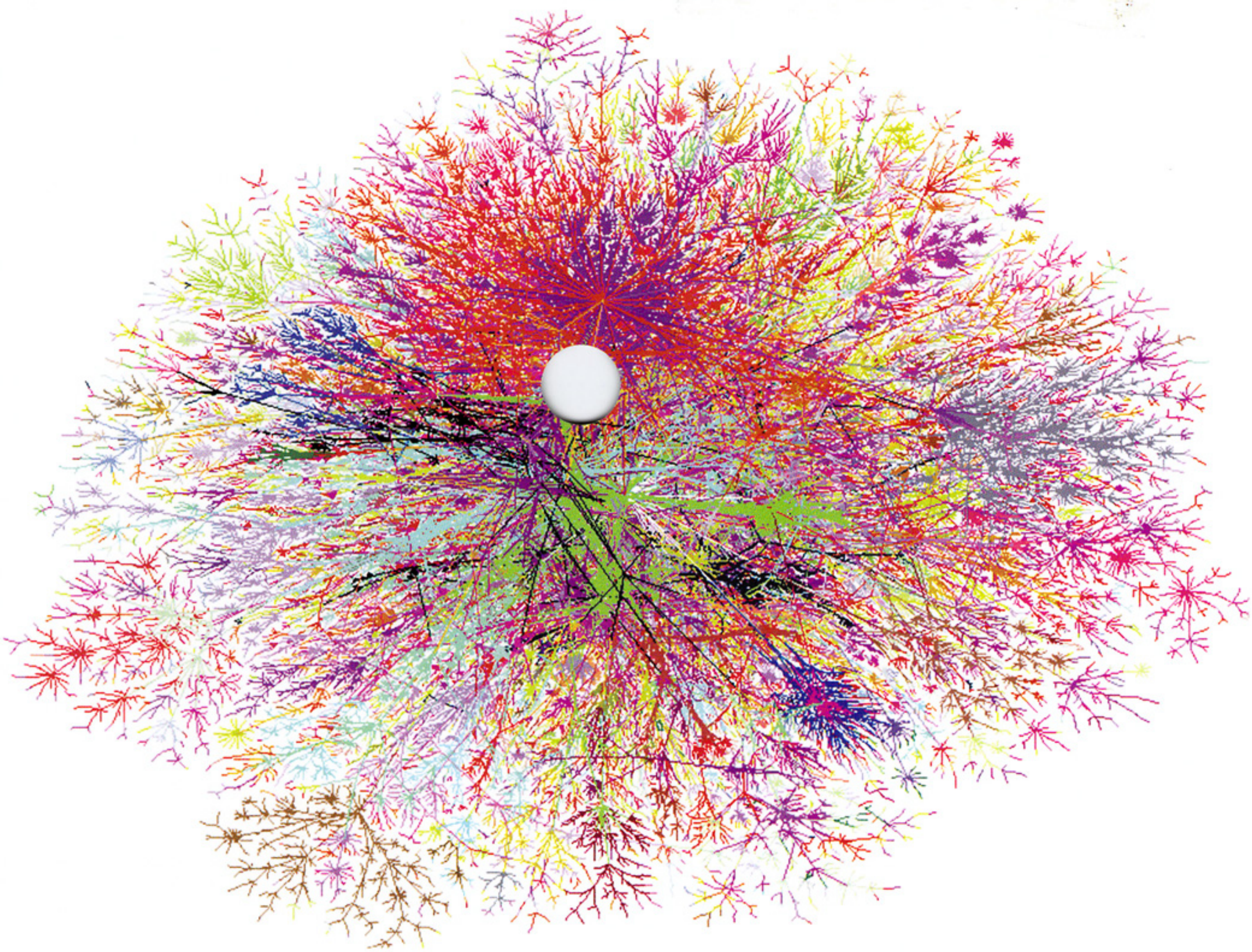
Only one generation have we lived in digital code.



FLORIAN SCHWINGE

conclusion: people prefer to be in natural environments, and especially in savanna or parklike habitats. They like a long depth of view across a relatively smooth, grassy ground surface dotted with trees and copses. They want to be near a body of water, whether ocean, lake, river, or stream. They try to place their habitations on

When you cut off arterial blood to an organ, the organ dies. When you cut the flow of nature into people's lives, their spirit dies. It's as simple as that.



MAP OF INTERNET PATHWAYS · COPYRIGHT © 2003 LUMETA CORPORATION

The hole in your head is a kind of "separation anxiety."

all this humanity from such humble beginnings. and look at the mess we're in. enormous complexity and organization, derivative of millennia of nature, yet all without plan or ambition. so begins our ultimate history. stirred over eons, the molecules swirl about with no interest to participate in anything greater. stasis dominates on a planet for which time does not exist. after a period of near forever, finally there comes a bit of complexity. the clock starts ticking. in a miracle of dislogic we still cannot comprehend, more hails from less. time passes slowly. then, in a further miracle of nature, life is born of the primordial stirrings. again, more from less, a true virgin mary moment. a question, were one possible at this most ancient time: what kind of intelligence can be hoped for in a world built of such chaotic creation?

no matter. cells run free in an emerging biological world. nature affecting nature, life interacting with life. complexity gives rise to greater organization, more complexity. organic earth teems with energy from seascape to landscape. something's in the air. tadpole and t-rex: the wild kingdom. the tree of evolution stands tall, roots under water, branches above ground. nature now exists in a duality of persistence and change. then comes the monkey business. another duality: the individual and the social; a natural society. millions more years pass and in a geological nanosecond consciousness is born. what is the nature of this nature?

no matter. here we are, we humans, scanning the landscape of our mother, hungry to grasp and control its wildness. such creation, created of such careless creation. hereafter nature must contend with human nature. evolution speeds up as a new, more accelerated form of evolution appears. culture rides high above the ground. derivative of nature, simple cultures arise out of cumulative daily acts – the amino acids of the new evolution. larger cultures take root, societies and nation-states take form. the clock ticks faster and the cry of humanity carries further.

no matter. industrialization rules. the circular time that once governed life according to the seasons is stretched out and flattened. a linear time of past, present, and future arrives: we

are born; we live; we die. fear of death reigns supreme. and so we are romping and stomping across the earth, full of ambition. a world born of nature that threatens the very existence of nature. science and technology become a great romance. water, steam, petrol, electricity. space, the final frontier. we have consciousness and power but still very little understanding of ourselves. out of nature we are like nature: great complexity out of less complexity have we created all this mess, all without a master plan.

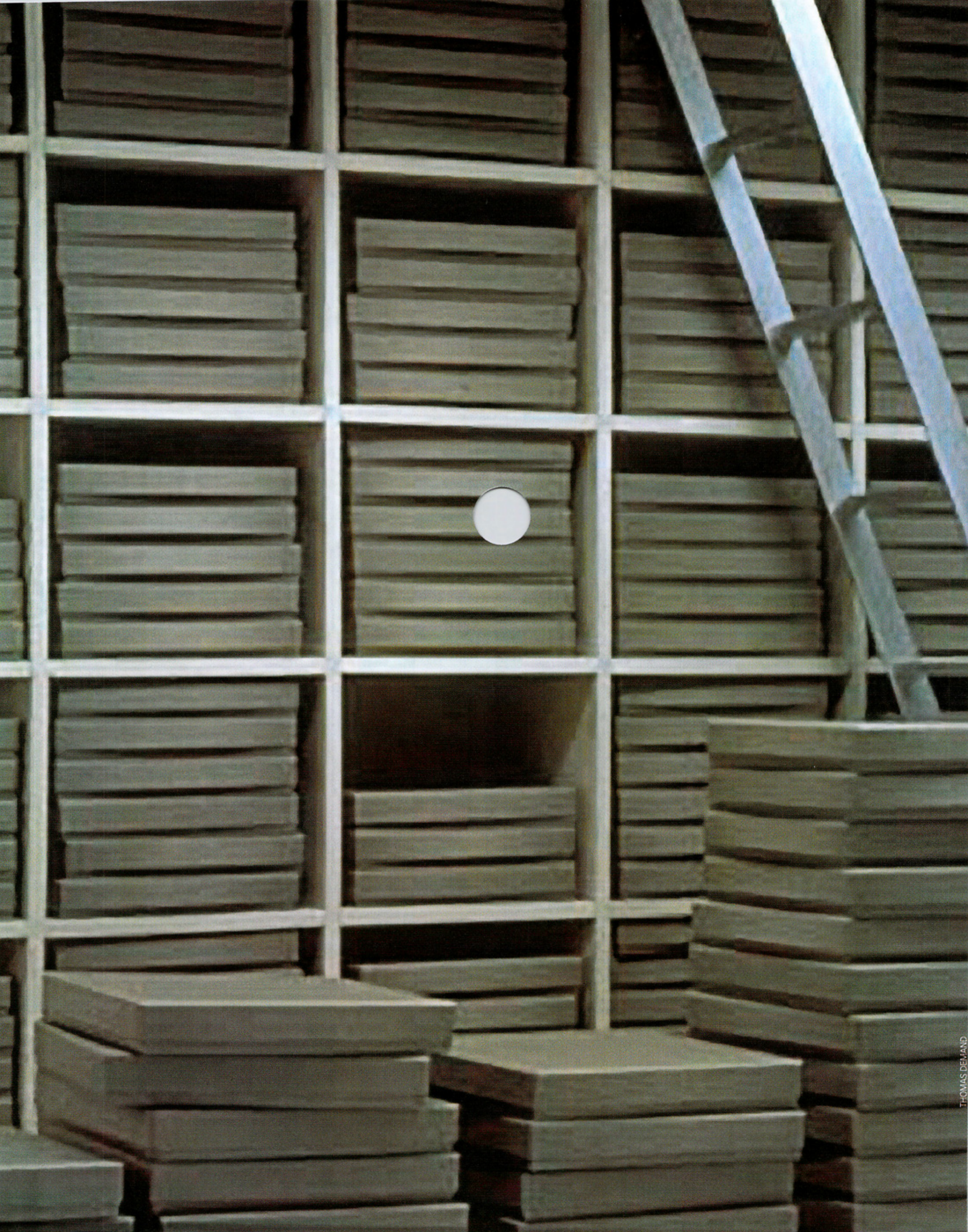
no matter. progress continues. soon the winds of global culture blow back and forth with fury, from the most ravaged to the richest parts of the earth. connections run the world round and the power of the corporation grows stronger. an interconnectedness beyond human connectedness, a consciousness beyond human consciousness. all this reckless creation, what tomfoolery. poverty, slavery and war persist, orchestrated from a machine hierarchy above. macroeconomics of the black and white. in the first world, trouble remains. nihilism. bourgeois bohemia. we feel an uneasy malaise. millions pop pills. we have extricated ourselves from nature to build a perfect world. instead, a new world order: decadence, depression, and disease. a million choices become a million itches. we fail to accept limits, not realizing the paradox of having many more choices than one. no master plan, no self-understanding. history escapes us. the world joins nature in falling out of balance. mascara runs down the face of humanity as SUVs roam the earth.

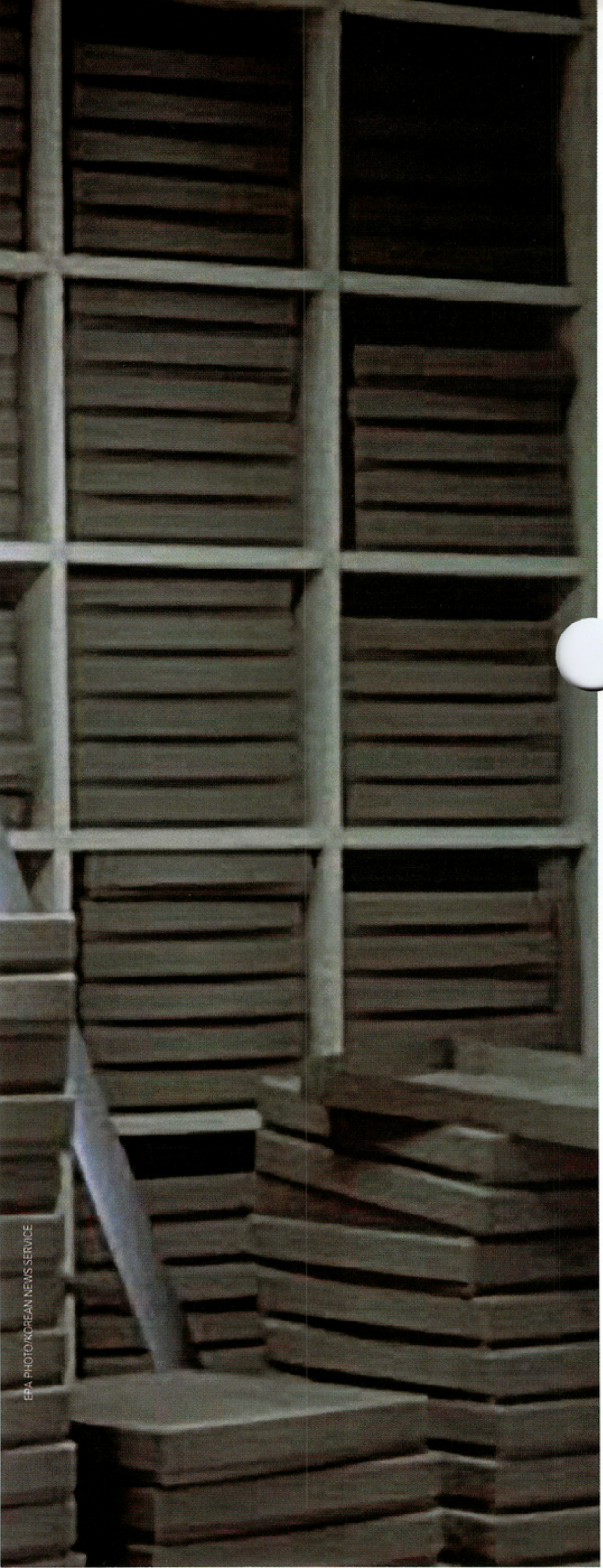
no matter. great achievements are being made. the information age. ring, ring. communication. a global village. a world vision: people stand together on bedrock, hand-in-hand, absorbing information, collectively navigating a material world. a reality: we sit hunched over as lonely individuals, nature extracted from nature, static brains staring out into the electronic breach. on the screen's glossy surface appears a reflection on the future of being human. the infinite depth of the here and now, the permanence of place and of staying put in time and space, has been liquefied. there is no place we can call home. anything is obtainable, yet nothing is definite or solid. alienated from nature, we are now also alienated from our own human nature. no master plan. we have run too fast and too far. we are driving off the cliff into a virtual sea.

no matter. ride the wave into an unbounded realm of timeless time and spaceless space. infinity. unlimited possibility.

Richard DeGrandpre

Have we evolved for an environment that no longer exists?


THOMAS DEMAND



EPA PHOTO/KOREAN NEWS SERVICE

IN ALL SYSTEMS, HOMOGENIZATION IS POISON. LACK OF DIVERSITY LEADS TO INEFFICIENCY AND FAILURE.

MATTHIAS HOCH

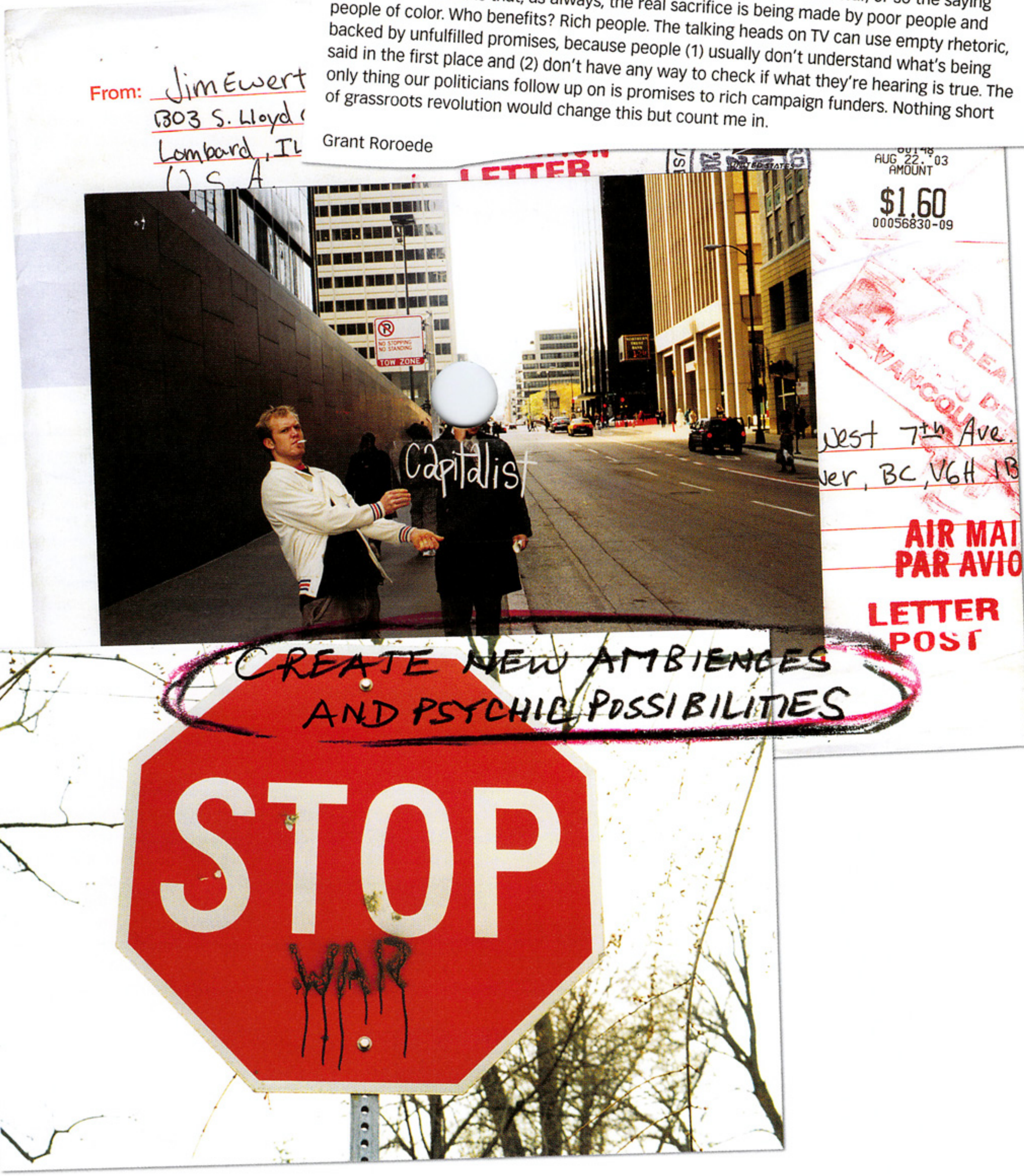
IN THE LAST FEW WEEKS...

1. Were you short of breath?	YES	NO
2. Did your heart race, pound or skip?	YES	NO
3. Did you have chest pain or pressure?	YES	NO
4. Did you sweat?	YES	NO
5. Did you feel as if you were choking?	YES	NO
6. Did you have hot flashes or chills?	YES	NO
7. Did you have nausea or an upset stomach?	YES	NO
8. Did you feel dizzy, unsteady or faint?	YES	NO
9. Did you have tingling in parts of your body?	YES	NO
10. Were you afraid of dying?	YES	NO

IF YOU THINK YOU MAY HAVE A PANIC DISORDER, TRY ZOLOFT

First and foremost we should reinstate the draft – people would be a lot more reluctant to support a war if it hit a little closer to home. Most people watch the war from a bar or at home while eating their dinner. Everyone must sacrifice in a time of war, or so the saying goes, but the truth is that, as always, the real sacrifice is being made by poor people and people of color. Who benefits? Rich people. The talking heads on TV can use empty rhetoric, backed by unfulfilled promises, because people (1) usually don't understand what's being said in the first place and (2) don't have any way to check if what they're hearing is true. The only thing our politicians follow up on is promises to rich campaign funders. Nothing short of grassroots revolution would change this but count me in.

Grant Roroede



CAPITALIST PHOTO: JIM EWERT - STOP WAR PHOTO: UNKNOWN, PLEASE CONTACT *ADBUSTERS*

the ME*. INDEX

At 99 feet wide, the world's largest digital billboard – just installed by Coca-Cola in London's Piccadilly Circus – isn't only catching eyes because the thing's so bloody huge: the mega-ad also reacts to its environment. In a breeze, the sign appears to ripple; in a downpour, huge digital raindrops appear on its face. Eventually, the giant ad will be able to respond to text messages, but for now it is only "smart" enough to recognize when people on the ground are waving at it. Imagining a coming era of artificial intelligence, the Index goes into a funk.

Of course, human intellect has already been branded. According to new research by French marketing company Nomen, words like Coke, Frisbee and Kleenex are taking up more and more headspace: two out of every five words an average person in France knows are brand names. "Brand names are more international than words and they are creating a new Esperanto," cheered Nomen's chief Marcel Botton. The Index is merely speechless.

What did Joe Perello, New York City's chief marketing officer, do during summer vacation? He sold out the exclusive beverage rights to New York City 1,200 schools to Snapple. The price tag: a staggering $166 million. Sugary soda has been banned from the schools, so beverage manufacturers are sneaking in with uncarbonated fruit juice that is "much the same as a 12-ounce Coke," according to nutritionist Dr. Michael Jacobson. Snapple's "100% Juiced!" has 41 grams of sugar in its 11.5-ounce container; a 12-ounce Coke has 39. But the company has a snappy comeback for critics: "If the parents don't like this 100 percent juice product . . . for their child, they can give their kids water," said Snapple's Steve Jarmon. The Index sees its stock in public drinking fountains tumble off the charts.

According to a *New York Times* sort of US Social Security records, more and more newborns are being named after their parents' corporate heroes. Within a few years, classrooms will be dotted with little mop-top Timberlands, Reeboks, Jaguars, Chanels and Camrys – not to mention a whopping 49 children named Canon in the year 2000 alone. The Index makes plans for a child named Xerox.

As ad creep gets ever creepier, public washroom ads are practically blasé. But what makes the damn things – a fixture in North America, the UK and Japan – so successful? The answer comes from the department of marketing psyops: the rate of recall for washroom ads is as high as 70 percent, towering over the 10 to 30 percent recall of TV ads. That's partly because of the time it takes to answer the call of nature, but it gets more personal than that. As Dublin's Initiative Media notes, our cultural squeamishness makes the pissoir ads an attractive distraction from our own awkward sounds and silences. And if Canada's University of Toronto students are the norm, there's little reason to hope for an anti-ad backlash. When the campus newspaper tried to gage the reaction to the ads, it met mainly with apathy – and a curious anger. "I like the ones with Kate Moss," said one U of T student. "I want to shoot the people who vandalize them." The Index runs for cover.

The SUV Worldview, Part I: A recent TV ad for Range Rover and Land Rover features a colorful foot procession down a narrow Southeast Asian street. At the center of the action, a woman is being carried on a pedestal, her face obscured behind silky curtains. Suddenly, a shiny new Range Rover appears, rolling into the middle of the procession, then stopping in its tracks. The camera studies the locals, then the truck's plush interior. The natives stare in awe. Finally, the woman on the pedestal waves the car through with a roll of her fingers. The tagline? "Respect." The Index declares irony dead, again.

The SUV Worldview, Part II: In the heat of the war on Iraq, the all-terrain vehicle used by US troops became – to some – a symbol of deep patriotism. California Hummer driver Sam Berstein enthused, "When I turn on the TV, I see wall-to-wall Humvees, and I'm proud. They're not out there in Audi A4's." Rick Schmidt of the International Hummer Owners Group (IHOG), told the *New York Times* his H2 is "a symbol of what we all hold so dearly above all else, the fact we have the freedom of choice, the freedom of happiness, the freedom of adventure and discovery, and the ultimate freedom of expression . . . Those who deface a Hummer in words or deed, deface the American flag and what it stands for." The Index pleads guilty as charged.

A yearlong study of happiness levels in 65 countries has found that, sure enough, money can't buy the stuff. The World Values Survey found that Nigeria (55th in the world for GDP) has the highest percentage of happy people, whereas the US (number one for GDP) ranks 16th and the UK 24th. Why so low? According to *New Scientist* magazine, "Survey after survey has shown that the desire for material goods, which has increased hand in hand with average income, is a happiness suppressant." The CIA World Factbook suggests some other possible factors: according to the most recent available figures, Nigeria is home to 134 million people and three TV stations, with 200,000 cell-phone and 100,000 internet users. Meanwhile, 290 million Americans share their mindspace with 10,000 TV channels; 69 million use cell phones and 166 million are wired to the internet. Despite it all, the Index is strangely buoyant.

*mental environment

Pencils? Check. Ruler? Check. Nose Job? Sure.

KIRK CONDYLES

YOU'RE A 39-YEAR-OLD UNMARRIED WOMAN, INCREASINGLY FORGOTTEN IN A culture that worships youth. Or you're a 13-year-old girl, trying to find meaning in a world of *CosmoGirl* and high-status cell phones. Complicated problems, yes, but don't think too hard. The feel-good industry has a simple solution: packaging.

"Packaging can be more important than the product itself," writes Rachel Greenwald, in *Find a Husband After 35 Using What I Learned at Harvard Business School*. Greenwald counsels middle-aged women to think of themselves as "product" for a market of marriage-minded men. Techniques include using focus groups for heartless feedback on your looks, creating a "personal brand" that sums up, in 10 words or less, your unique characteristics, and advertising your brand through – what else? – direct-mail campaigns to friends and acquaintances.

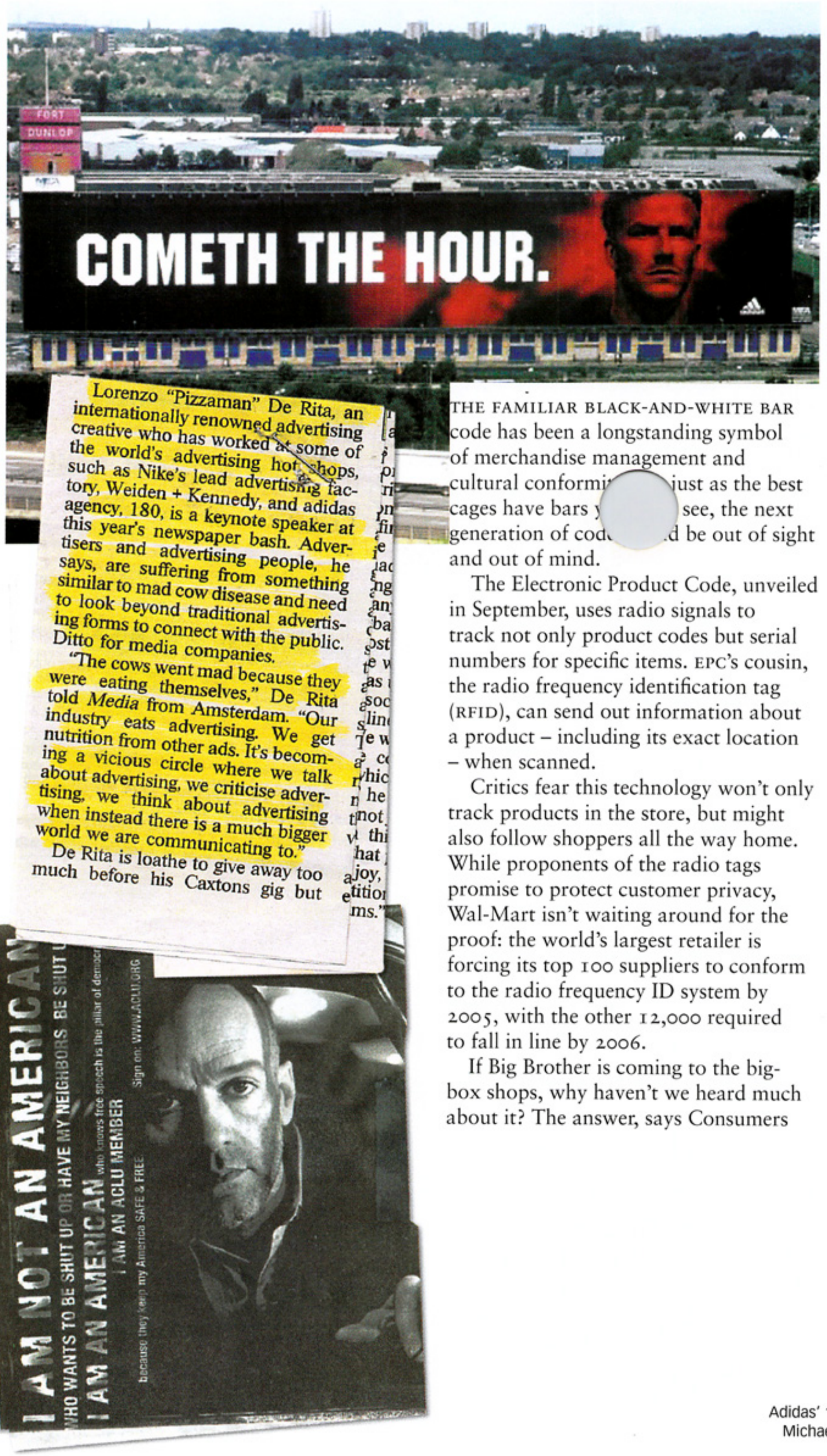
Assertive women may have to change some of their, ahem, more troubling characteristics. Men, says Greenwald, "like a gracious woman who is a good listener." Women should refrain from sex to convince potential mates of their long-term purchase value. And would it kill you to grow your hair long?

You wouldn't have these problems if you'd read *Revolve* magazine as a teenager. Market surveys show that teens find the Bible "too big and freaky looking" to pick up. So the logic of packaging gives them, instead, a flashy magazine version of the complete New Testament, punctuated with pictures of smiling girls in cute hats. This good book not only brings young girls to His Word through fashion tips, celebrity birthdays (pray for Britney Spears on December 2) and feature stories like "Are You Dating a Godly Guy?", it also prepares them for a lifetime of submission. *Revolve* girls *don't* take the lead in relationships. *Revolve* girls *do* get married before the age of 35. And that is something of a miracle, because *Revolve* girls *never* call guys. Ever.

In the old days, love may have been mysterious and God's nature unfathomable. But everything makes more sense when you speak the universal language of commerce.

Eliza Strickland

Back-to-school shopping, New York, August 2003



THE FAMILIAR BLACK-AND-WHITE BAR code has been a longstanding symbol of merchandise management and cultural conformi[illegible] just as the best cages have bars y[illegible] see, the next generation of cod[illegible]d be out of sight and out of mind.

The Electronic Product Code, unveiled in September, uses radio signals to track not only product codes but serial numbers for specific items. EPC's cousin, the radio frequency identification tag (RFID), can send out information about a product – including its exact location – when scanned.

Critics fear this technology won't only track products in the store, but might also follow shoppers all the way home. While proponents of the radio tags promise to protect customer privacy, Wal-Mart isn't waiting around for the proof: the world's largest retailer is forcing its top 100 suppliers to conform to the radio frequency ID system by 2005, with the other 12,000 required to fall in line by 2006.

If Big Brother is coming to the big-box shops, why haven't we heard much about it? The answer, says Consumers Against Supermarket Privacy Invasion and Numbering (CASPIAN) spokeswoman Liz McIntyre, is that Wal-Mart's corporate keepers "feel their best chances of getting what they want is to move forward before consumers have a chance to react."

It's a sensible strategy. According to studies by the MIT Auto-ID Center, which developed the RFID technology with corporate and US Defense Department funding, nearly 80 percent of consumers have serious privacy concerns about these new bugs. Advocates have downplayed suggestions that the radio tags could be used to track individuals or, say, scan a home from the outside to inventory the possessions inside. Unfortunately, exactly those sorts of scenarios are already playing out: next summer, Coca-Cola plans to launch a special contest in which winners will be given prizes ranging from a Hummer H2 to a million dollars in gold. The company plans to track them down, using satellites to find cans outfitted with global positioning system transponders.

In another area of crossover concern, the San Francisco public library system is considering a budget for embedding RFID chips in their loan materials, beginning in 2005. In a letter to the library commission, the Electronic Frontier Foundation reminded the librarians that in the age of the Patriot Act, US secret police have been fighting to access individuals' library records. The plan to bug books, the foundation argues, "raises great privacy concerns because insecure RFID tags will permit inventorying of people's possessions and tracking of people via their possessions. These risks are especially great where books and other reading materials are concerned, because both privacy and freedom of expression are at stake."

Paul Schmelzer & Clayton Trapp

Adidas' 1.5-acre World Cup Billboard, Birmingham, UK, May 2002
Michael Stipe in an American Civil Liberties Union ad, Fall 2003

THE AUSTRALIAN, SEPTEMBER 2003

There was a time when "neuromarketing" was just a grim prediction from science fiction. Now this eerie blend of science and capitalism is all too real, but with a kinder, gentler makeover into something they call "thought science."

"We think it is tremendously powerful," says Brian Hankin, president of the BrightHouse Institute for Thought Sciences. "It is a way to uncover unprecedented insight into how people think about the world, express preference, develop preference, and how that translates into buying behavior." Thought science uses technology like magnetic resonance imaging scanners to study how the brain responds to ads and what makes shoppers open their wallets. Such million-dollar devices are typically found humming in the halls of medicine. No longer: Coca-Cola and General Motors are among the companies sponsoring this brave new market research, hoping to pinpoint the mechanisms of the mind that make consumer culture tick. Some critics charge that thought science could one day allow marketers to seize control over people's wishes, drives and choices. But that's just sci-fi dreaming. Isn't it?

Marketing agency Cunning Stunts is offering the lure of an £88 weekly fee for students willing to become walking adverts

BOREDOM IS A CULTURAL PHENOMENON UNIQUE TO WESTERN culture (but now, unfortunately, being spread like a virus to non-Western cultures). Bedouins, for example, can sit for hours in the desert, feeling the ripples of time, without being bored. Traditional societies know nothing of boredom. Traditional life is a goal-oriented existence where the goals are deeply embedded in the worldview of the tradition and have real meaning for those who imbibe the tradition. It is enriched by countless face-to-face, intimate relationships, based both on extended families and communal life; personal relationships in traditional societies tend to be shared, close and intimate, leading to a host of duties and responsibilities that give orientation and meaning to individual lives. In most third world societies, individuals and communities are normally too busy trying to survive to be bored. Boredom is a product of culture where individual and communal goals have lost all their significance and meanings, where an individual's attention span is no longer than a single frame in an MTV video: five seconds. In such a culture, one needs something different to do, something different to see, some new excitement and spectacle every other moment. Netsurfing provides just that: the exhilaration of a joyride, the spectacle of visual and audio inputs, a relief from boredom and an illusion of God-like omniscience as an added extra. But, of course, travel at such a high speed has a price. Hypertext generates hyper-individuals: rootless, without a real identity, perpetually looking for the next fix, hoping that the next page on the Web will take them to nirvana. The individual himself is reduced to hypertext: a code of information. And this process seems to be accelerating.

Ziauddin Sardar, from
The Cybercultures Reader *(Routledge, 2000)*

The Guardian, February 7, 2003

PETER MARLOW / MAGNUM PHOTOS

DRIVING TO THE AIRPORT TO PICK UP A FRIEND, I STOP at a red light. My eyes wander to a bus-stop bench across the intersection. "Norma Whitfield – Your Real-Estate Connection." Wham. Before I even have time to react, the advertisement has entered my mind and lodged itself between the folds of my thoughts. Another chunk of my mental landscape, grabbed without consent. There was nothing special about this ad. Every bench in the city is festooned with a marketing message, and my eyes have passed over thousands, possibly millions, like it before. Yet this time it stood out, somehow starker than the rest. Some balance inside me had tipped, and I suddenly felt saturated. My mental landscape had been overgrazed.

Thirty-five years ago, Garret Hardin, a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, authored a ground-breaking article in the journal *Science* that introduced an idea: the tragedy of the commons. Our survival was at stake, he argued, if we failed to open our eyes and realize that Earth's physical resources were finite. Treating them as a free-for-all was no longer acceptable if we wanted to reduce human suffering and prolong our existence on this planet.

To illustrate the tragedy, he used the example of 14th-century common land. "Picture a pasture open to all," he wrote. "It is to be expected that each herdsman will try to keep as many cattle as possible on the commons." When a herder adds a cow to the pasture, he reaps the benefit of a larger herd. Meanwhile, the cost of the animal – the damage done to the pasture – is divided among all the herdsmen. This continues until, finally, the herders reach a delicate point: as the pasture becomes overgrazed, each new animal threatens the well-being of the entire herd. "At this point," Hardin argues, "the inherent logic of the commons remorselessly generates tragedy."

For me, the advertisement on the bus-stop bench felt like that tragic breach. We continue to share a commons today – a commons of the mind. It's a mental environment, shaped by everything from cultural cues to the physical space that surrounds us. At every level this mental commons is cluttered and commercialized. Millions of data points and marketing messages threaten to "overgraze" our attention. Our mind is their pasture.

"Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush," said Hardin. As pessimistic as this view is, we have proved him right. Since he penned this warning, humanity has spread to every corner of the globe: we've scoured the land, razed the forests, emptied the seas and dirtied the rivers in the selfish interest of progress. Now, just as we begin to grasp our impact on the physical commons, the tragedy has begun to replay itself in an even more fragile realm. The assault on the mental environment has become an ever greater threat to our survival: we are losing our capacity to focus, to think, to find common ground, to communicate and come to agreement. We are losing the mental clarity to deal with the crises that we have created.

An exaggeration, you say. Not quite. The staggering rise of anxiety and attention deficit disorders, depression, suicide, workplace violence and addiction is now a staple story of our news media. Less familiar is the concern rippling through the marketing industry itself. The herders are getting nervous: "Marketers are going through a difficult period right now," declares one company's website. "Channel proliferation, attention span reduction and marketing overload are creating an increasingly cynical consumer audience who are each subjected to over one million marketing messages per year (or over 3,000 per day). 'If you're not interesting me now then you can forget later,' is becoming their mantra." In a desperate attempt to free our mindspace, we are simply tuning out of everything around us. The UK marketing trade magazine *Campaign* did a study in 1998 that found that 52 percent of consumers were flipping channels during commercials.

Even the so-called "well-adjusted" among us are feeling the pressure. The effects may be subtle – a slight anxiety, a cynical attitude, a wave of fear – but this makes them all the more insidious. You see a can of Coke in a movie, and you stop following the plot to deconstruct Coke's marketing strategy and determine that you've just been subjected to paid product placement. You see a kid in a bandana loitering in a convenience store parking lot, and a flood of mental images and messages warns you that he may be a gang member. Instead of working, you check your email every 10 minutes in need of new information, fresh stimulus. You notice that you can't speak or listen for more than a minute anymore. Your mental environment is wearing thin.

Is it too late to reclaim our mental commons? It wasn't long ago that our mindspace was still comparatively clean. I can remember – and I'm only 30 – when bus benches were only for sitting on, when the wall above the urinal was just an expanse of white tile, when a fashion magazine was lighter than a phone book. I remember when you could let your mind wander as you filled your car with gas, instead of staring at a tiny billboard on the nozzle. When the attendant would say, "Thank you, have a nice day," instead of pushing an Esso Extra card on you. Would it be that hard to get it back?

The question, as Hardin noted, is one of freedom. "When men mutually agreed to pass laws against robbing, mankind became more free, not less so." We must decide whose freedom is more important: the bank robber's or the banker's; the marketer's or our own. We need to grasp the idea of the mental commons, and realize that it, too, can succumb to an all-too-human tragedy. Putting more cows out to pasture isn't helping anyone.

Kevin Arnold

You thought it, but now science proves it: a steady diet of Fox News – 82 million served last year and counting – will make you dumb and dumber. In May, media über-mogul Rupert Murdoch told a US Senate Committee that his News Corporation and its flagship Fox News Channel were "challenging the established and often stagnant media." At the same time, researchers with the University of Maryland's Program on International Policy Attitudes (PIPA) were discovering that Fox News has a strong lead in misinforming its viewers. According to the PIPA study, people on a steady diet of Fox news and commentary were nearly four times as likely to hold "egregious misperceptions" about the truth than consumers of NPR or PBS news. "Among those who primarily watch Fox News, those who pay more attention are more likely to have misperceptions," the report added. "Only those who mostly get news from print media have fewer misperceptions as they pay more attention."

What kinds of falsehoods are Fox viewers likely to believe? In the case of the ongoing war on terror, the list includes the "fact" that Saddam Hussein had a role in the 9/11 attacks, that weapons of mass destruction have been found in Iraq, and that the world supported George W. Bush's invasion. According to the PIPA study, 80 percent of Fox viewers hold at least one of these myths to be true; 45 percent believe all three. There is also a direct correlation between misinformation and support for the war: 86 percent of Fox viewers who believed at least two of the three untruths fully supported the war in Iraq. "People who have a strong belief that there is an unholy alliance between politics and the press now have more evidence," remarked Marvin Kalb, a senior fellow at the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University.

A staggering 80 percent of Americans get their news exclusively from broadcast media. Thanks to sports coverage, *The Simpsons* and *American Idol*, Fox is the number one TV channel with people between the ages of 18 and 49.

It's fitting, really, that the first foreign-owned channel to wiggle into the tightly controlled media market in China was Xingkong Weishi, a Mandarin-language channel distributed by the News Corporation. China, after all, has a long history with imperial dynasties. Once hated by Beijing, largely for his 1992 comment that satellite television was "a threat to totalitarian regimes everywhere," Murdoch has done much to mend fences. In a recent speech to 100 Communist leaders in Beijing, Murdoch received not jeers but cheers. "The unleashing of the potential of the open market does not represent any loss of power," he said. "On the contrary, as the Party goes from running the country's media businesses to overseeing their growth, both China's leaders and her people will be greatly empowered by the rewards."

From the days of Joseph Pulitzer in the late 1800s, most journalists have argued that the press is different from other economic endeavors – that it must keep its distance from business and government to protect its social role. Well, Rupert Murdoch skipped that lecture. His take on journalism is simple: journalism is business. Big business. And now, writes media journalist James Fallows, we're entering the age of Murdoch. "Rupert Murdoch is this era's influential figure," he says. "Murdoch's long-standing determination [is] not simply to broaden News Corp's portfolio . . . but to extend his strategic control of the supply and distribution channels on which his existing businesses rely. Murdoch's companies now constitute a production system unmatched in its integration. They supply content – Fox movies, Fox TV shows, Fox-controlled sports broadcasts, plus newspapers and books. They sell the content to the public and to advertisers – in newspapers, on the broadcast network, on the cable channels. And they operate the physical distribution system through which the content reaches the customers." Conclusion: the next big wave of media consolidation will be others trying to "match what Murdoch has put together."

At 72 years old, the grand old man of News Corp is hinting that he'll soon step off the stage. An end to the "age of Murdoch"? Hardly. In trademark style, the boss is carefully planning his successors – his two sons, James and Lachlan. Not the dustbin of history, then, but the dynasty of the future.

John Bronson

Rupert Murdoch is sworn in before testimony to the house committee on the judiciary, Washington, DC, May 2003

AFP PHOTO/NICHOLAS ROBERTS

IN SEPTEMBER, ADBUSTERS ENTERED INTO HIGH-LEVEL NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE Fox Broadcast Corporation. We wanted to do what any burger, beer, SUV or shampoo company can do every day in America: buy 15, 30 or 60 seconds of airtime. The answer came as no surprise: "You might understand, for a broadcast TV network things like boycotting television and anti-consumerism might not go over very well with our other advertisers," said Tim Souris of the broadcast standards department. Fox, he said, makes an effort not to rock the boat.

Did we hear that correctly? Was Souris saying that the hard-hitting network that broadcasts "ambush interviews" doesn't like to wade into controversy? "Fox Broadcasting really doesn't," he said. "We're a prime time TV network. We just show things like *Simpsons* and *24* and *Boston Public*, *American Idol*. It's all very mainstream." So up the ladder we went to Darlene Lieblich, executive director of broadcast standards. The Fox policy comes from the top, she said – "the Fox über-mensch." Product ads are okay, and advocacy ads are not. Case closed. "I'm sure we're not the only venue who has blocked you," she said. "I know. I've been kicking around this business for a long time." But she wouldn't let us go without a seed of hope. "Get yourself a federal lawsuit going and we might have some room to talk."

The hunt for free-speech airtime began in 1991, when the publicly owned Canadian Broadcasting Company refused to run anti-logging ads at a time when the timber corporations were having their say with ads every night. The CBC changed its rules – and kicked both sides off the air. This year, we put the heat on Canada's commercial broadcasters. Success has been mixed, but the hardest hitting spots have yet to find an audience. Here's Al Hudak of CTV, reacting to a spot promoting Buy Nothing Day: "We're in the business to make money and we're in the business to help sell customers products. So why would we come out and say 'don't buy anything' and, you know, affect the economy. Because that's what it would be; it would be a negative effect on the economy."

What we needed was a network with guts, so we went knocking on doors at MTV. We showed Jackie Soriano, the director of commercial clearance, a set of eight TV spots about everything from anti-consumerism to voodoo economics to television addiction. "We can't advertise something that's too controversial," said Soriano. But is it controversial to point out, for example, that 52 percent of a Big Mac's calories come from fat? It's a fact: we got the information from McDonald's own website.

MTV: As I said, we're a network and we are loyal to our advertisers. We cannot accept advertising that disparages our major advertisers.

Adbusters: And isn't having all the information important when the public makes a decision?

MTV: They do have all the information. They know what they're eating. We do make the public aware, absolutely. But anything controversial, we cannot accept.

Adbusters: And you feel the basic health information about a product is controversial?

MTV: Like I said, it is up to the fast food chains to decide whether or not they want to expose the public to that.

Adbusters: To know all the health information of food – is that not important to know?

MTV: Sir, all I can tell you is that it would be up to McDonald's to tell you how terrible their food is for you.

"Controversy." The word keeps coming up. Since the early 1990s, the ABC, NBC and CBS networks have been saying the same thing: they'll sell ads for oil companies or fast food, but "controversial issues of public importance" are strictly the domain of the news. Julie Hoover, an ABC vice president, said that allowing public-issues advertising would give the richest in society an advantage in every debate. But what if the issue is advertising and the consumer culture itself?

Adbusters: Can you understand our frustration? We're trying to speak on the public airwaves, and your network is saying that we can't, but the corporations can.

ABC: You know what I feel like saying? Suck it up, it's the real world. You can get on many stations if you want to – maybe not attacking McDonald's, but certainly making some of the points you want to. I mean, attacking McDonald's, attacking a specific advertiser, that's kind of an ugly thing to do.

Adbusters: But shouldn't we have the right to say those things? Isn't that freedom of speech?

ABC: Say it. Get a soapbox. But there's no law that says we have to sell you time or space to do it.

Adbusters: So we can't have our side of the debates?

ABC: Have it on CNN.

As a matter of fact, we do buy time on CNN. In the late 1990s, the network was turning down every spot cold. Then a *Washington Journal* reporter called to ask the CNN executives what they had against free speech. One hour later we were okayed for prime time. Since then, CNN has been a quiet champion of free-speech airtime, even agreeing to run the Big Mac Attack that spooks every other network. Watch for it.

Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's control over his nation's collective mindset is staggering: Of seven terrestrial television channels in Italy, Berlusconi has influence over six. Mediaset, a private corporation that is 48 percent owned by Berlusconi, runs three channels, while RAI, the country's state broadcaster, is indirectly under the prime minister's governmental control, giving him another three channels with which to manipulate the message. Combined, RAI and Mediaset give Berlusconi a market share in the region of 90 percent.

Truth comes through a tube in Italy: More than 82 percent of Italians get their news exclusively from television. And Silvio makes the most of his control of the national airwaves. During the 2001 election campaign, Berlusconi received 1,427 minutes of airtime on Mediaset channels, compared with 887 minutes for his main rival, Francesco Rutelli. And when Prime Minister Berlusconi's mouth gets him into hot water – he once claimed that "Mussolini never killed anyone," but rather sent them on "holiday in exile" – his gaffes are, conveniently, not aired on Mediaset.

How rich is Silvio? He's the richest person in Italy, and 29th in the world, with a personal fortune estimated at $12 billion. A self-made man, he started as a crooner singing on cruise ships, later became a construction tycoon, and finally created Italy's first commercial TV network. Today the Berlusconi family owns Fininvest, which controls Mediaset, along with insurance and banking interests, a football team, the largest publishing house in Italy, and *Il Giornale*, the largest newspaper. Berlusconi's glamorous wife, permanent tan and turbocapitalist lifestyle have become a buzzword in Italy: "Berlusconismo."

Calling Italy the land that feminism forgot, UK *Financial Times* journalist Tobias Jones writes that the television studio has replaced the senate in Italy and "soft porn" has replaced hard news. "TV seems like one long song and dance karaoke show" with "girls in bikinis everywhere," says Jones. "[Berlusconi] has turned television into an ideological vacuum, in which the medium really has become the message. The result, of course, is that the mogul has become the Prime Minister."

The European Union powers are watching Berlusconi's Italy with increasing disdain. In a report on fundamental rights in the EU written by France's Fodé Sylla, the European Commission called upon the EU to guarantee that public and private broadcasters provide citizens with accurate information. "[The Commission] deplores the fact that in Italy in particular a situation is continuing in which media power is concentrated in the hands of the prime minister, without any rules on conflict of interest having been adopted."

Declaring themselves "illegal, but constitutional," an Italian activist group called Telestreet (http://www.telestreet.it) is going toe-to-toe with Berlusconi over the national airwaves. In February 2003, Telestreet launched a nationwide pirate television transmission using 25 micro-stations. The action made it plain to Italians that they live in a TV dictatorship – with a media underground just waiting to bloom.

John Bronson

EPA PHOTOS/FILIPPO MONTEFORTE

Silvio Berlusconi in Rome, September 2003

ADBUSTERS DIDN'T STOP ITS SEARCH FOR AIRTIME IN CANADA AND the USA. With the help of allies overseas, we pushed for access on four more continents – and we discovered that when it comes to commercial communications, it really is a small, small world.

"None of the stations in the UK would run [the *Adbusters* spots], simply because the objective of their commercials is to get people to buy consumable goods so that [the stations] can make programming and make a profit . . . I mean, we could have a debate about capitalism and all that, but at the end of the day the commercial channels are there to make a profit."

–Duanne Dedman, Broadcast Advertising Clearance Center (BACC), UK. The BACC reviews ads for British broadcasters to ensure compliance with Independent Television Commission rules. The *Adbusters* spots were rejected for having "political nature," and for denigrating other advertisers' products.

"We are really sorry to inform you that we can't broadcast the spots, because of our current load rate. We wish you success for your campaign and we hope that it will find a lot of support."

– Pamela Ende, RTL TV, Germany. Polite but evasive.

The Buy Nothing Day spot?
"It really wouldn't be in our interest to do that."
The Big Mac spot?
"It wouldn't be in our interest to do it."
The Product Is You spot?
"[It's] obviously disparaging against TV itself or TV advertising. It wouldn't make sense for us to [air] it."
The Beauty Myth spot?
"Again, it's controversial.
Anything else you'd like to say?
"Basically, across all of the spots we felt there were going to be problems."

– Chris Hitchins, Oracle Airtime Sales, South Africa. Oracle is the central agency for two of the largest private South African TV networks, DSTV and M-NET.

"The character is seen burping."

– Cryptic rejection from Channel 5, France. Apparently the anti-consumption spot, featuring the First World as an animated pig, offended French sensibilities.

Ruth Ward, Commercials Advice Pty Ltd: "I can't see anything in these advertisements that I think would alarm any of the networks particularly. So you should be in good hands."
Eddie Reginato, Channel 7: "This is going to create some real angst with our key advertisers and clients and agencies . . . we won't be putting that to air. None of the spots."

– Commercials Advice is the advisory body for Australia's small but usually gutsy private broadcasters, such as Channel 7 and Channel 9. This time, the networks made their own rules.

"We are a commercial broadcaster, so we are not willing to say ['buy nothing'] to our viewers. I think that's the last thing to say for us, considering our business . . . Freedom of speech in democracy and Broadcast Standards is totally different."

– Jin Yokoi, Tokyo Broadcast Standards, Japan. With its closed media system run by secretive private owners, many observers expect Japan to be among the last to open up its airwaves.

Adbusters Free-Speech Airtime Project: Tim Walker, campaign manager; in collaboration with Casseurs de Pub, France; Greenpeace Germany, Australia, USA and Canada; Indymedia Seattle, Washington DC and New York City (The Independent); Reclaim the Media, Seattle; Gabi Hadl and Kato Taizo, Japan; Earthsave, Canada; Buy Nothing Day, UK; Laugh It Off, South Africa.

WWW.MEDIACARTA.ORG

For a dystopic view of your possible media future, visit a news shop in Vancouver, Canada, an infamously easygoing west coast metropolis. Choose from two local daily newspapers, both owned by the nation's multi-media powerhouse, CanWest Global Communications Corp. You might also pick up the *National Post* or one of a dozen regional weeklies, also owned by CanWest. For another, strangely similar viewpoint, try the most-watched TV news on Global Television – it's also in the CanWest family.

Canada as a whole isn't faring much better than Vancouver. CanWest owns 36 percent of all daily newspapers, while its TV holdings reach 94 percent of English-speaking Canada. When CanWest CEO Leonard Asper speaks his mind, Canadians – and especially Canadian journalists – have little choice but to listen. And the CEO isn't shy about his views. "Many journalists are either doctrinaire socialists or hold political views left of center," asserted Asper during a recent speech, reprinted (he's the boss) in the *National Post*. He later added that the typical Canadian "Marxist journalist" is also anti-Semitic.

Personal opinion isn't all that Canada gets from Leonard Asper, however. CanWest publications succumb to top-down edits by the Asper team, and editorials written by any of its 11 metropolitan dailies are often screened by head office. (Editors and publishers have challenged CanWest's control – and some have been fired.) Asper's head office also provides mandatory "national editorials," which often appear on the front page: they're nicknamed "Aspertorials" by the company's embittered journalists.

Having turned Canada into a future-shock experiment in media concentration, CanWest is expanding. The company now has holdings in the US, Europe, Australia and New Zealand, as well as advertising beachheads in Malaysia and Indonesia. Around the world, would-be media moguls look to "Asperization" as a modern answer to the powers of *Pravda*. And rest assured: if your media is slowly being Asperized, you won't read about it in the news.

John Bronson

CanWest Global CEO Leonard Asper in Toronto, February 2000

AC/PHOTO BY ANDY CLARK REUTERS

SITTING ON A PATIO ONE SUNNY afternoon, a group of CanWest Global and ex-CanWest Global journalists talk about what they always talk about when their bosses are out of earshot. These are the stories they never file, and it is not too dramatic to say that they look over their shoulders before they speak, leaning into one another like conspirators.

"What a hell week it's been." The reporter is talking about a story his newsroom was assigned to cover, the launch of what he calls "an advertising campaign designed to look like a city festival." At the press conference, a spokesman held up an egg. It was a metaphor for the birth of a new celebration, or something like that (plus, the egg marketing board was the event's main sponsor). Four reporters and three photojournalists from CanWest were sent to cover the announcement, which the publisher also attended. The company's newspapers would publish a glowing report, of course. These kinds of events, it is understood, are "good for business."

The waitress takes our orders. We gaze at the impressionistic view as seen through the thick smog of the city. Beyond the mountains to the east, some of the worst forest fires in Canadian history are beginning to rage. You couldn't be expected to know that, necessarily: in the first days of the fires, not a single CanWest print reporter was sent to the scene. They were all too busy on other assignments, says the scribe who's been complaining. The population of news-gatherers has dropped dramatically this year, what with layoffs and buyouts and cost-cutting measures.

Anyone who has other options is leaving – and even those who don't. Much of "the news" comes off the wire now, reports from somewhere else written by someone else. Celebrity skin. But you'd think forest fires – that's drama, visuals. They should at least cover that.

The definition of "not news" is simple. Does it take more than an eight-hour shift to report the story? It is probably not news. Anything that requires costly investigation is not news. Anything that challenges the specific political views or politicians esteemed by CanWest Global's owner, the Asper family (their views are well publicized, violate them at your peril), is not news. The CanWest Global TV stations run inflammatory editorials on the owner's pet viewpoints (Palestinian terrorism is a popular theme for careerists).

One angry reporter wanted to pull the byline on the city festival story, to let the article run anonymously, but that would be "a big 'fuck you' to management," and no one can afford that. The reporter has a mortgage, a family. And it's not like there are many other places to find work. The only other daily newspaper in the city is located in the same building, and is owned by CanWest. "Many voices," someone once said, "and one ventriloquist." Says the reporter: "If you don't like it, learn to make cappuccinos." If you want to be a journalist in this town, there's really only one employer signing the checks.

At a conference of journalists in Montreal, Robert Fisk, a Mideast correspondent for the *Independent* out of the UK, addressed an audience of 200 media professionals. He spoke of the current dominance of "vapid, hopeless, gutless, unchallenging journalism," the "facile, unquestioning acceptance of authority," and how "the language of journalism has as usual fallen into step with government." He got a standing ovation. At the end of his talk, a journalist from one of the CanWest newspapers – known to have had her columns censored for her views – approached the microphone. Can we start a support group for CanWest journalists? she asked.

Some CanWest newspapers submit their editorials to their publishers, who can call the Asper headquarters in Winnipeg if there are any doubts about the content. "Most of the time, it doesn't come to that. People are scared. Anyway, key staff are hand-picked because they won't say no to anything. Or else they have the same opinions the owners do." The top editors will never complain of censorship. In fact, they will endlessly deny it. Their censor has been internalized, like a transplanted organ that is no longer distinct from its host body.

Another day, after work, a group of writers and editors gathers to drink on yet another patio. They crowd under the umbrella. "What strange weather," someone observes. An editor starts talking about the death of journalism. Some new people arrive and vie for a spot in the shade. "We're discussing the death of journalism," says the editor. She makes quote marks in the air with her fingers: the "death of journalism." Someone mentions that when the budget cuts came down – no more investigative features or anything that takes serious research, serious thinking, serious time – the publisher offered a solution.

"Just use more white space."

Pat Martens

REUTERS/LARRY DOWNING

Text adapted from 'Empire of Novices,' Maureen Dowd, *New York Times*, September 3, 2003.

A FRIEND OF MINE WHO WORKS FOR A MENTAL HEALTH insurance corporation told me something that surprised me. After the September 11 attacks, she said, there was a predictable spike in demand for crisis counseling – mainly fueled by requests from those corporate "human relations" departments that are always trying to justify their existence. Actual rank-and-file worker bees, however, the ones who use insurance, displayed the opposite behavior: for three weeks following the attacks, they stopped going to therapy.

My friend suggested possible causes. Maybe, between watching CNN and hitting re-dial to friends in New York, people didn't have time or psychic energy to devote to therapy ("shock and awe," the medical director at her company called it). "The same thing happens on a smaller scale every year during the holidays," my friend explained. It's also possible that in contrast to, say, incineration or leaping to certain death, our "dysfunctional families and validation needs" seemed banal. But these are only partial explanations. It occurs to me that the attacks exposed the very contradictions in American life that therapy proposes to heal – a function that has now been partially replaced by war.

Chief among the contradictions is that somewhere along the way, we've confused the pursuit of happiness enshrined in our founding documents with the pursuit of overabundance. This conflation inevitably leads to disappointment and depression. Most of us are strivers, forever chasing a goal that looks, upon closer examination, distressingly like our own tail. Another friend of mine, a truck driver, works eight days and then enjoys two days off. But lately he finds that he doesn't enjoy much of anything; it's hard to connect with his wife and children. "Sometimes I don't connect at all," he says. But with a $3,000 monthly truck payment, he keeps driving until he drives himself to distraction. Even those who achieve super-abundance, unlike my friend, frequently discover that whatever they gain from status and wealth is quickly eaten away by guilt, anxiety and worthlessness.

In either circumstance, therapists are on hand, like battle-field surgeons, to stitch up our wounds and get us back into the fray. The super-rich, psychologists say, suffer from "affluenza" and should "heal" their "dysfunctional" relationships with money. And for the truck driver there's the self-help industry. On his layovers he's reading a book that explains the trap of negative thinking. Want change? Change your mind! He's depressed, but modern psychology treats his depression as a sort of free-floating condition, a state of mind unconnected to the world's suffering – or even to his own.

If you examine clinical protocols it becomes plain that cause and effect are largely irrelevant to psychotherapy. Mental illness – not the abstract trope but the actual condition – is defined in page after page of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the DSM IV. A narrative list of every imaginable mood, anxiety and sexual disorder, it forms the basis of every diagnosis and prescription, and they're maddeningly vague. Diagnosing a "Major Depressive Episode" for instance, doctors look for depressed or irritable mood; weight loss or gain; sleeplessness or sleepiness; restlessness or fatigue. The critical requirement for most DSM IV diagnoses is that the symptoms "impair functioning" at work, school or home. Mental illness, then, is defined as a function of cultural norms. Can the patient make love? Go to work? Enjoy the shopping mall? If not, he or she is clinically depressed. Functionality requires consumption. Consumption causes depression. Depression impairs functionality.

What really brings therapy full circle, though, is that it, too, is a consumer industry. Pharmaceutical companies are increasingly colonizing the nether regions of our brains, competing to stake ownership over a DSM diagnosis, a ready-made cure in hand. It's called "condition branding" by the industry and they cite "premenstrual dysphoric disorder" (really bad PMS, invented and treated by the makers of Prozac), and "panic disorder" (invented and treated by Upjohn), as success stories. "No therapeutic category is more accepting of condition branding than the field of anxiety and depression," writes one perceptive marketing consultant, "where illness is rarely based on measurable physical symptoms and, therefore, open to conceptual definition."

Thus therapy and consumption serve identical purposes. Both hold out the promise of an ideal self – balanced, fulfilled, "actualized" and fully accessorized. Psychologist and critic James Hillman calls this journey an "exaggerated self-searching to find out who you are." Rather than accepting its full range, this brand of psychology divides our human experiences into binary oppositions, into good feelings and bad. Personal fulfillment is good; sacrifice to the community is bad. Self-esteem, good; guilt, bad. But we dismiss our dark side at our own peril. Suffering results in empathy; anxiety engenders desire for change; fear of death, if acknowledged, radically alters our approach to life.

Our lives are filled with little ruptures – from traffic jams to church services – that invite us to reflect. For an entire nation to take notice, of course, the rupture must be more extreme, the psychotropic more powerful. Like the affluenza-inflicted rich, we in the US have collectively achieved overabundance. The September 11 attackers' choice of the World Trade Center is widely understood (outside of the US) as a symbolic attack on the "free" trade system that aids and abets our material disparities with the rest of the world. But it seems Americans would rather "heal" than learn.

Our response to the rupture? War is our new psychotropic. War precludes our doubts. War preserves our right to pursue overabundance. War closes the circle. It creates anxiety; it cures anxiety. It defines our alienation; it resolves our alienation. It measures, then levels, the imbalance between us and our enemies. War preserves our way of life.

Joseph Hart, a freelance writer and editor, is the author of Down and Out: The Life and Death of Minneapolis's Skid Row, *and editor of two forthcoming anthologies,* The Che Guevara Reader *and* A Dollar A Day: Portraits of Women's Work During the Industrial Revolution.

PHOTO MONTAGE: OLIVIER ALARY

AS THE ALCOHOLIC GEORGE W. BUSH approached his 40th birthday in 1986, he had achieved nothing he could call his own. He was all too aware that none of his educational and professional accomplishments would have occurred without his father. He felt so low that he did not care if he lived or died.

Bush himself has described staring at his vomit-spattered face in the mirror, then falling to his knees and imploring God to help him. Almost overnight, he became a teetotaling, fundamentalist Christian. David Frum, his former speechwriter, described the change: "Sigmund Freud imported the Latin pronoun 'id' to describe the impulsive, carnal, unruly elements of the human personality. Bush's id seems to have been every bit as powerful and destructive as Clinton's. But sometime in Bush's middle years, his id was captured, shackled and manacled, and locked away."

One of the jailors was his father, whose long shadow was cast over both Bush's secondary school, Andover, and his university, Yale. A large black-and-white photograph of his father in full sporting regalia hung on the wall at Andover – Bush Sr. had been one of the most successful student athletes in the school's 100-year history, and was similarly remembered at Yale. George W.'s younger brother Jeb summed up the problem: "a lot of people who have fathers like this feel a sense that they have failed."

On the one hand, Bush worshipped and aspired to emulate his father. On the other hand, deep down, Bush had a profound loathing for this perfect model of American citizenship whose very success made the son feel a failure. Bush described his goal at school as "to instill a sense of frivolity." Contemporaries at Yale say he was like the John Belushi character in the film *Animal House*, a drink-fuelled funseeker. He was aggressively anti-intellectual and hostile to East Coast preppy types like his father, sometimes cruelly so. On one occasion he walked up to a matronly woman at a smart cocktail party and asked, "So, what's sex like after 50, anyway?"

As Bush grew older, the fury towards his father was increasingly directed against himself in depressive drinking. But the relationship with his patriarch explains only part of the current presidential subconscious. There was also his insensitive and domineering mother.

Barbara Bush is described by her closest intimates as prone to "withering stares" and "sharply crystalline" retorts. She was also extremely tough. When he was aged seven, Bush's younger sister Robin died of leukemia and several independent witnesses say he was very upset by this loss. Barbara claims its effect was exaggerated, but nobody could accuse her of overreacting: the day after the funeral, she and her husband were on the golf course.

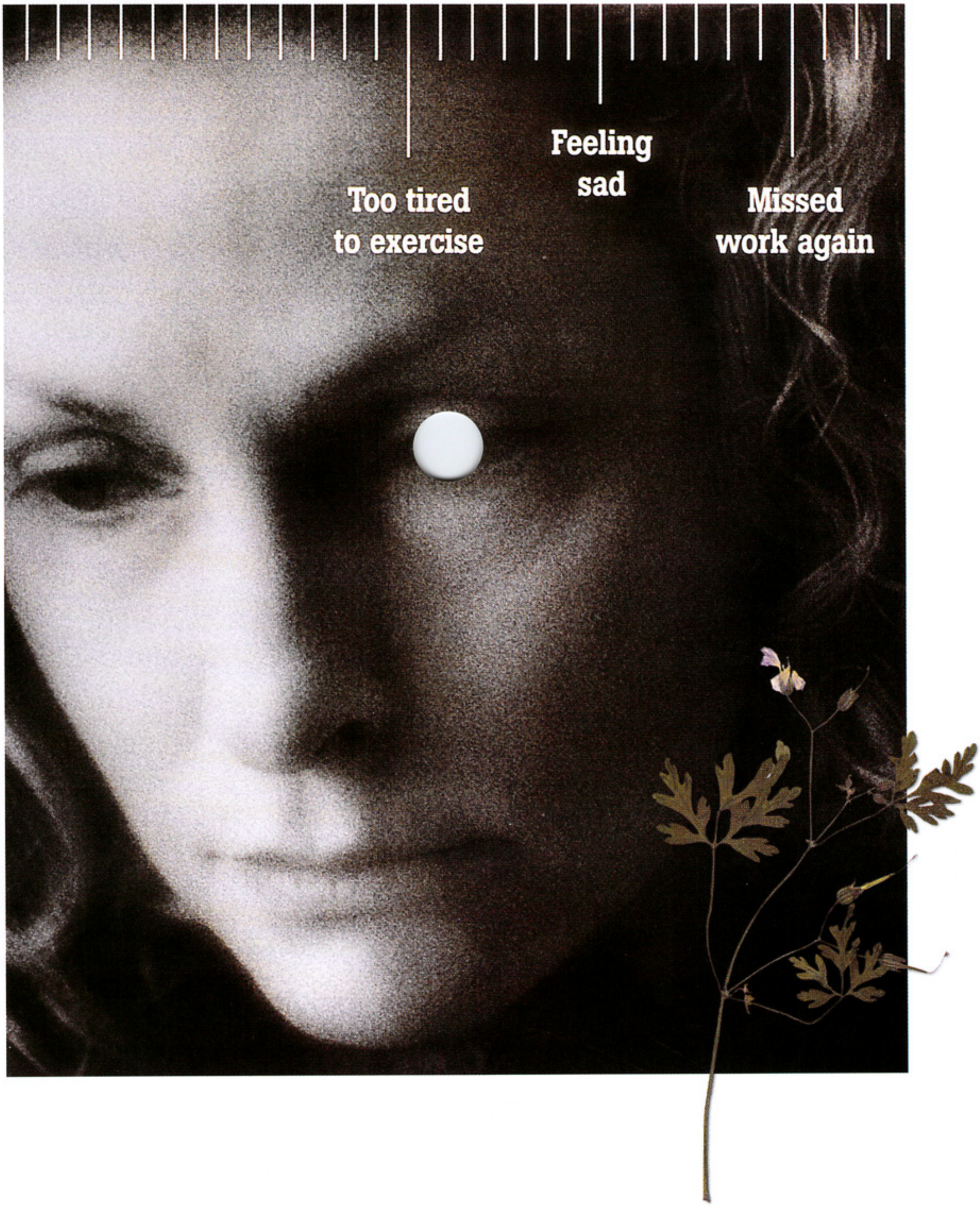
Barbara was the main authority figure in the home. Bush himself put it like this: "Every mother has her own style. Mine was a little like an army drill sergeant's . . . my mother's always been a very outspoken person who vents very well – she'll just let rip if she's got something on her mind." According to his uncle, the "letting rip" often included slaps and hits.

Countless studies show that boys with such mothers are at much higher risk of becoming wild, alcoholic or antisocial. On top of that, she added substantially to the pressure from his father to be a high achiever, creating a highly competitive family culture. All the children's games, be they tiddly winks or baseball, were intensely rivalrous – an actual "family league table" was kept of performance in various pursuits. At least this prepared him for life at Andover, where emotional literacy was definitely not part of the curriculum.

Soon after arriving he was asked to write an essay on a soul-stirring experience in his life to date; he chose the death of his sister. His mother had drilled into him that it was wrong when writing to repeat words already used. Having employed "tears" once in the

the world is under a great siege of hegemonic control in intellectual, political and social thinking,

QUOTE: WAZIR JAHAN KARIM IN *MEDIA ASIA*, 2001



Lexapro ad, from *Psychiatric Annals*, May 2003

MANUEL SÉNDON

Better for our boys to die in the
desert than for us to drive less and lower our thermostats.

essay, he sought a substitute from a thesaurus and wrote "the lacerates ran down my cheeks." The essay received a failing grade, accompanied by comments like "disgraceful."

This incident may be an insight into Bush's strange tendency to find the wrong words in making public pronouncements. (He once famously declared that critics of his intellect had "misunderestimated" him.) Perhaps these verbal faux-pas are a barely unconscious way of winding up his bullying mother and waving two middle fingers at his cultured father's sensibility.

The outcome of this childhood was what psychologists call an Authoritarian Personality. Authoritarianism was identified shortly after the Second World War as part of research to discover the causes of fascism. As the name suggests, authoritarians impose the strictest possible discipline on themselves and others – the sort of regime found in today's White House, where prayers precede daily business, appointments are scheduled in five-minute blocks, women's skirts must be below the knee and Bush rises at 5:45 a.m. and invariably fits in a 21-minute, three-mile jog before lunch.

Intensely moralistic, authoritarian personalities direct their outrage toward despised social groups. As people, they avoid introspection or loving displays, preferring toughness and cynicism. They regard others with suspicion, attributing ulterior motives to the most innocent behavior. They are liable to be superstitious. All these traits have been described in Bush many times, by friends and colleagues.

The most common targets of authoritarians through history have been Jews, blacks and homosexuals. Bush is anti-abortion and his fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible would mean that gay practices are evil. His moralism is all-encompassing and as passionate

as can be. He proposes, for example, to replace state welfare programs with faith-based charitable organizations that would impose Christian family values.

But perhaps the group Bush reserves for his strongest contempt are those who have adopted the values of the '60s. He says he has always loathed "people who felt guilty about their lot in life because others were suffering." He has always rejected any kind of introspection. Everyone who knows him well says that he is hard to get to know, that he lives behind what one friend calls a "facile, personable" facade. David Frum comments that "he is relentlessly disciplined and very slow to trust. Even when his mouth seems to be smiling at you, you can feel his eyes watching you."

His deepest beliefs amount to superstition. "Life takes its own turns," he says, "writes its own story and along the way we start to realize that we are not the author." God's will, not his own, explains his life.

Most fundamentalist Christians have authoritarian personalities. Two core beliefs separate fundamentalists from mere evangelists ("happy clappy" Christians) or the mainstream Presbyterians among whom Bush first learned religion with his parents: fundamentalists take the Bible absolutely literally as the word of God, and they believe human history will come to an end in the near future, preceded by an apocalyptic battle on Earth between the forces of good and evil.

According to Frum, when Bush talks of an "axis of evil" he is identifying his enemies as literally satanic – possessed by the devil. Whether he specifically sees the battle with Iraq and other "evil" nations as being part of the "end time," the apocalypse preceding the day of judgment, is not known. Nor is it known whether Tony Blair shares these particular religious ideas.

What is sure is that, however much George W. Bush may sometimes seem like a buffoon, he is also powered by massive, suppressed anger toward anyone who challenges the extreme, fanatical beliefs shared by him and a significant slice of his citizens – in surveys, half of Americans agree with the statement that "the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word."

Bush's deep hatred, as well as love, for both his parents explains how he became a reckless rebel with a death wish. He hated his father for putting his whole life in the shade and for emotionally blackmailing him. He hated his mother for physically and mentally badgering him to fulfill her wishes.

But the hatred also explains his radical transformation into an authoritarian fundamentalist. By totally identifying with an extreme version of their strict, religion-fuelled beliefs, he jailed his rebellious self. From now on, his unconscious hatred for them was channelled into a fanatical moral crusade against evil.

As David Frum put it, "Id-control is the basis of Bush's presidency, but Bush is a man of fierce anger."

That anger now rules the world.

Oliver James is a clinical psychologist and author of They F**k You Up *(Bloomsbury, 2002). This article reprinted from* The Guardian.

TODD EBERLE

Media Carta

we are in
the fight of
our mental lives

The march of freedom has been humankind's gradual awakening. We have come to accept the simple truth that oppression does not have to stand. We are under no one's thumb. In every way we control our own destiny.

The idea of a free citizenry was born with the ancient Greek notion of rule by the people — democracy. It was founded in the city-state of Athens, predating Christianity by half of a millennium. At its height, the Athenian democracy brought together an assembly of over 5,000 citizens, all of them men, each with the power to speak his mind. It was the boldest political experiment in history.

Freedom has always been fragile. Athens failed after 200 years.

KING JOHN OF ENGLAND SIGNS THE MAGNA CARTA, JUNE 6, 1215.

ARCHIVE PHOTOS

The Magna Carta, forced on the authoritarian King John by the armies of England's rebellious barons, revived the fight for freedom in the Middle Ages. The world's first constitution favored only the barons, but also contained the seeds of individual rights and limitations on power.

15TH CENTURY PRINTSHOP.

At the heart of freedom lies the freedom to talk to one another: to communicate. That, too, is as old as the ancient Greeks, who recognized the right of citizens to express their opinions. When the world's first mass medium — the printing press — was introduced in 1455, it became clear that "freedom of opinion" was not enough to guarantee free speech. The press dramatically increased the power to communicate over space and time, but many "Gutenberg revolutionaries" were suppressed when they tried to print their opinions about kings and popes.

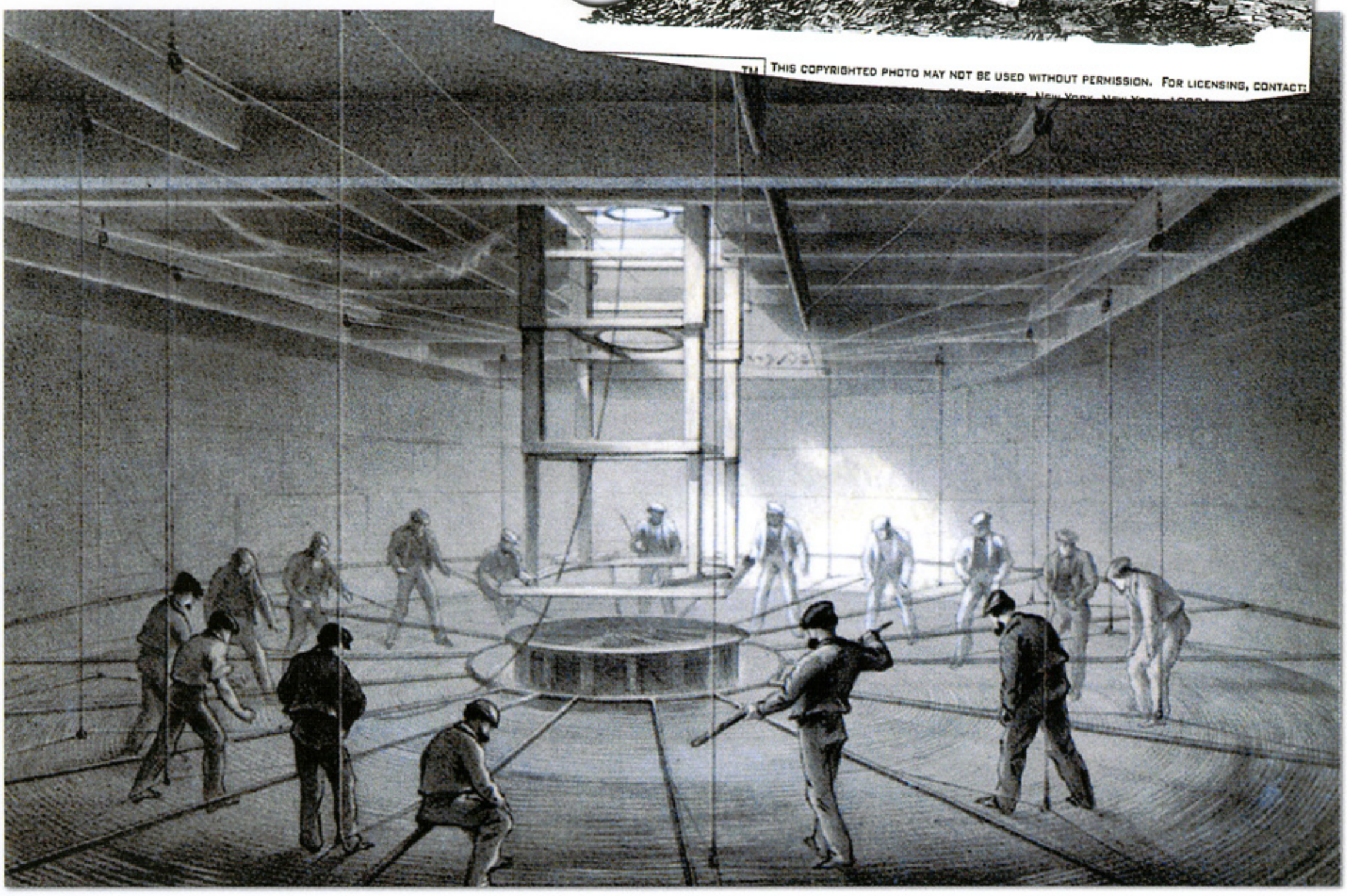
GABRIEL RIQUETI, THE COMPTE DE MIRABEAU (1749-1791); POLITICIAN, WRITER, MODERATOR AND ORATOR DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

It took more than two centuries to establish freedom from prior censorship as the cornerstone of a higher ideal — "freedom of expression" was born. This new right was first recognized in the English Bill of Rights in 1689; in France and America it helped launch the revolutions that still ring out around the world. The 1789 French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen asserts that "the free communication of ideas and opinions is one of the most precious rights of man."

The freedom meme was spreading. It would inspire the American Revolution and the end of slavery; it held the promise of universal suffrage and the dream of equality among all people.

Freedom of speech and technology have always marched together, from the carrier pigeon to the Pony Express. And then, in 1866, a global communications breakthrough: the first successful trans-Atlantic telegraph cable. The distance between the old world and the new was compressed into a matter of moments, but a new gap — an access gap — began to widen. Telegraph transmissions cost a dollar for every letter, at a time when most people earned less than a dollar a day.

AMERICAN STOCK/ARCHIVE PHOTOS



THE ATLANTIC TELEGRAPH 1865, W. HOWARD RUSSELL

TELEGRAPH CABLE PASSING OUT OF A TANK ON BOARD THE GREAT EASTERN, THE TRANS-ATLANTIC TELEGRAPH LINE STRETCHED MORE THAN 2,300 MILES, FROM IRELAND TO NEWFOUNDLAND. 1866

ORPHANS LISTEN TO THE RADIO, CIRCA 1925.

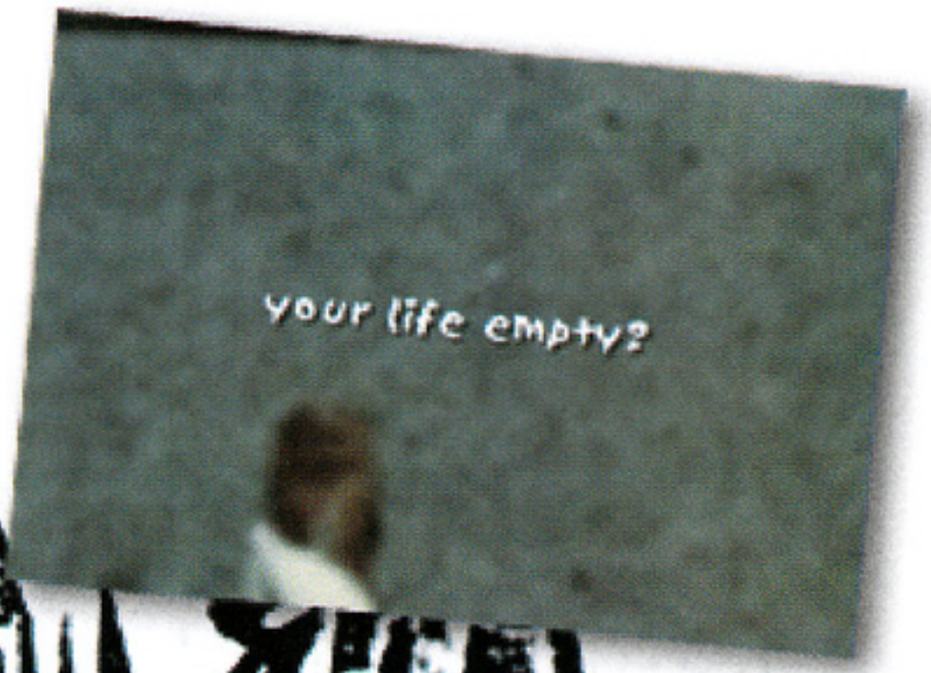
Freedom! Freedom! Freedom!

At the dawn of the 20th century, the nature of individual expression was rapidly changing. People enjoyed greater freedom of speech and opinion than at any time in memory. But the power to communicate, to reach the largest possible audience through radio, film and the printed page, was becoming the private privilege of commercial, corporate and government interests.

SPEAKER'S CORNER, HYDE PARK, LONDON

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

THE ORATOR, BY ERNST LUDWIG KIRCHNER, 1923. GERMAN EXPRESSIONIST ARTISTS, MANY OF THEM SOLDIERS, HAD A SINGLE AIM: TO OVERTHROW THE POLITICAL ELITE THAT WAS SENDING MEN TO WAR.



In 1934, the United States Congress passed a Communications Act that effectively ceded the public airwaves to private and commercial interests. Similar acts were passed in the UK, Canada and other countries. Broadcasters were required to serve "the public interest, convenience and necessity," but that standard was slowly relaxed to the point of meaninglessness. The Communications Act killed the soul of broadcasting, defining it forever as commercial.

STAND UP POLITICS, 2000

DRAWN & QUARTERED/ROY PETERSON

Worldwide, the march of freedom was becoming a brutal struggle. The worst failings of humanity — war, genocide, poverty — tested our resolve for our own liberation. Censorship returned with a vengeance; opinion became dangerous. Propaganda altered the face of history, and hinted at the coming explosion of advertising and marketing — the "commercial speech" that has become the most dominant form of expression of all time.

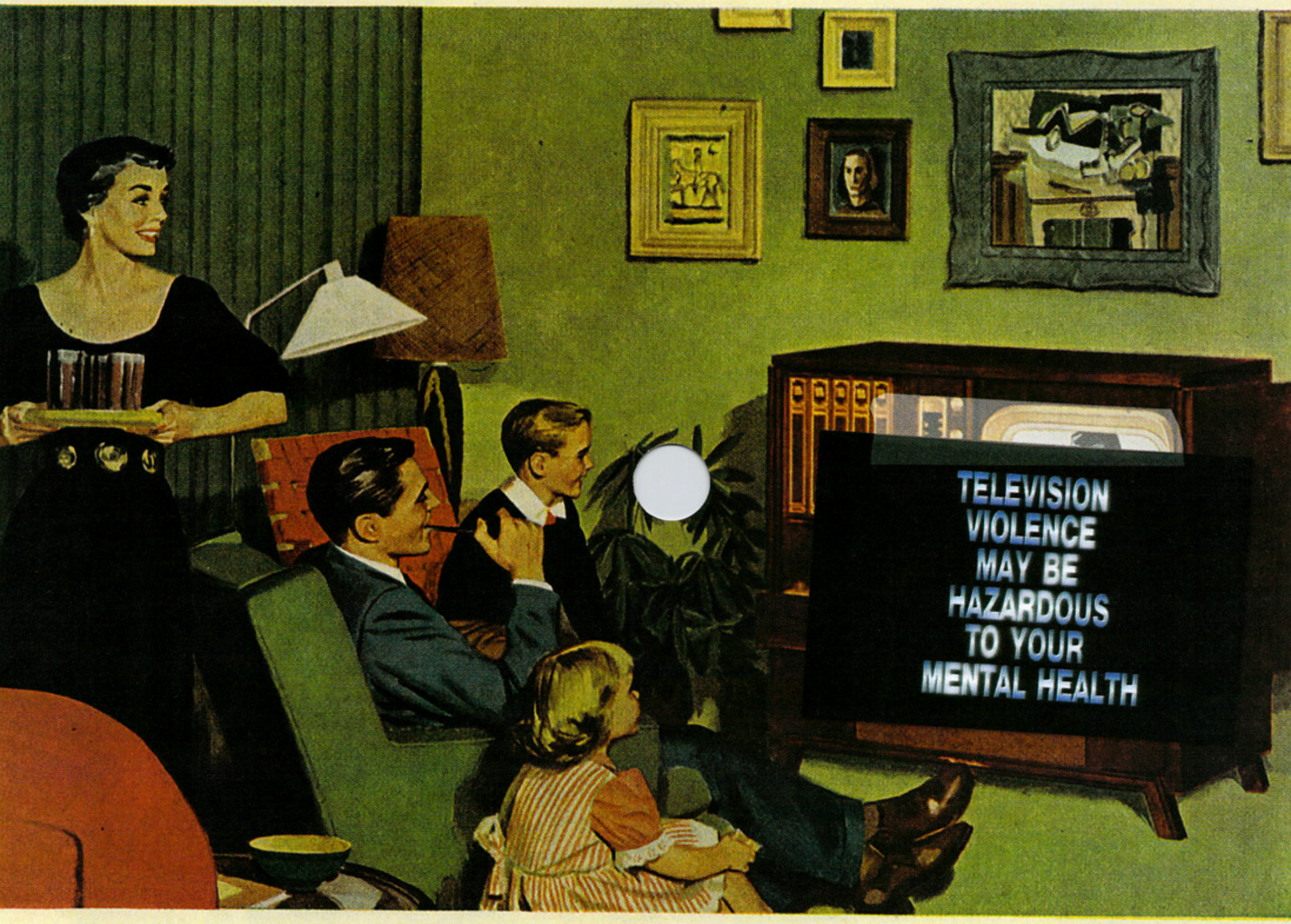
"Truth"
"Reason"
"Good"
"Evil"

THE YOUNG ADOLF HITLER, 1923.

By 1942, two millennia after Athens, the number of the world's democracies had been reduced to 12.

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

TV happiness shared by all the family!



Model 17F6—in mahogany and limed oak. 17 inch TV... FM and AM radio ...3 speed phonograph.

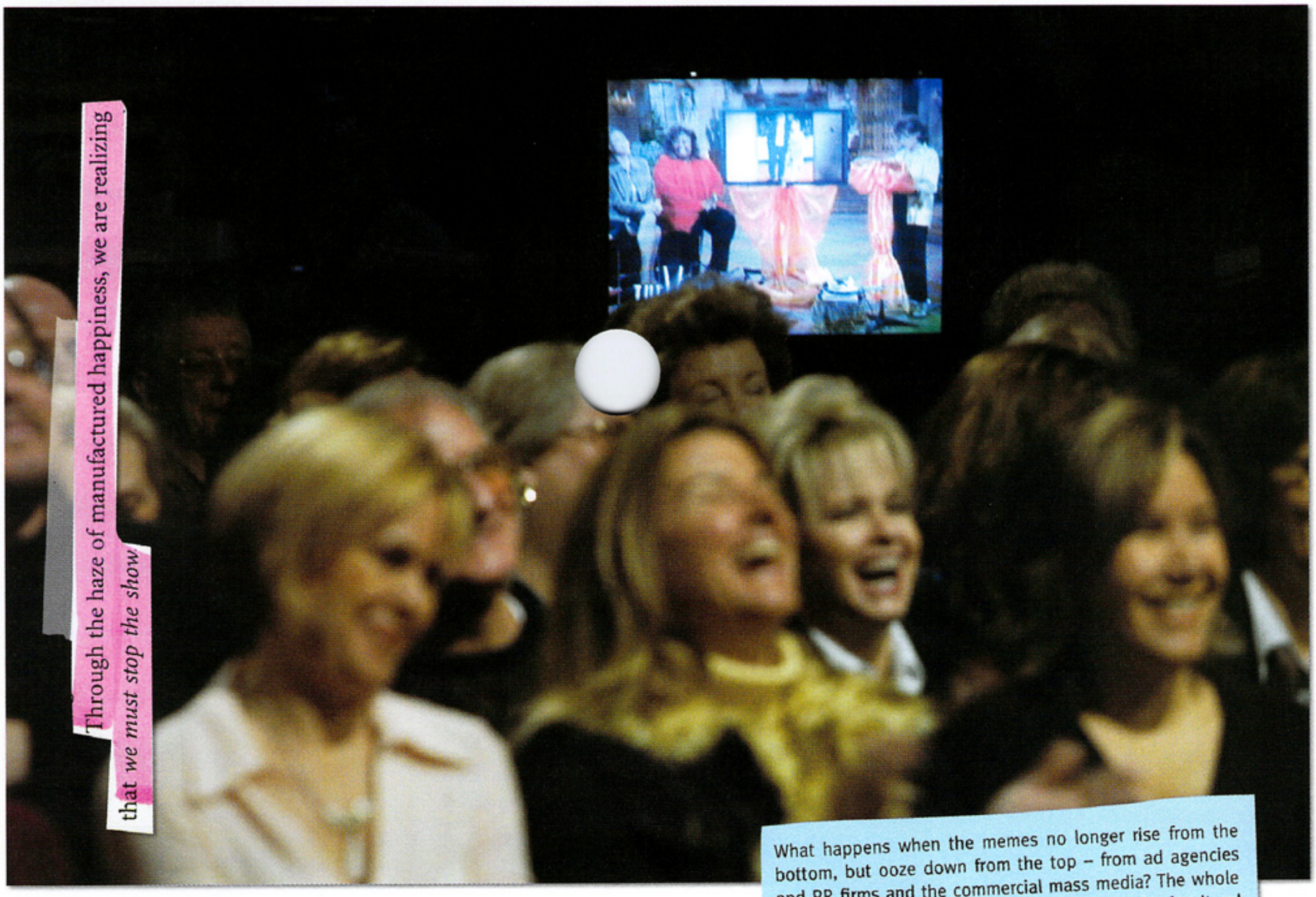
Whether it's a party for friends or just a quiet evening at home . . . your Motorola TV will add plenty of pleasure with its variety of entertainment. Drama, music, sports and educational programs . . . all these are yours on Motorola's big-screen, photo-perfect television! Hear your favorite recorded music faithfully reproduced with Motorola's dependable and easy-to-operate "Multi-Play" record

Motorola TV

But freedom would have a third wave. The world was entering an era of civil rights, and the freedom to communicate ideas and experiences was fundamental among them. On December 10, 1948, freedom of information was enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 reads, in part: "Everyone has the right . . . to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media regardless of frontiers."

who is singing the songs and telling the stories now?

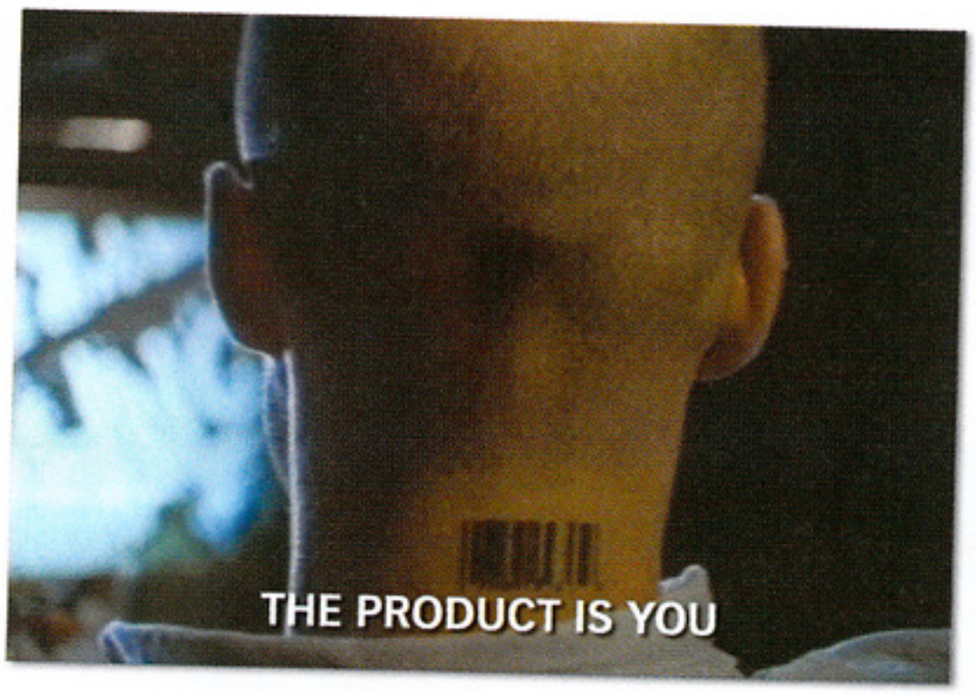
STUDIO AUDIENCE FOR ABC'S THE VIEW, GLENDALE, CALIFORNIA, FEBUARY 2003



L.A. TIMES PHOTOS/GARY FRIEDMAN

What happens when the memes no longer rise from the bottom, but ooze down from the top – from ad agencies and PR firms and the commercial mass media? The whole mindscape is plunged into chaos. The locus of cultural power is dislocated, authenticity and spontaneity lost. The free meme mating dance is replaced by a culture-manufacturing machine. Ideas spread not when people interact, but when they switch on their TVs or computers, or when they read a wire-service story in the paper. The result is a different kind of mating ritual for the meme: one-way, nonconsensual, silent, and in a profound way, violent.

Half a century later, we have entered the information age. The number of democracies worldwide has doubled, then doubled again. We have access to a mind-numbing array of facts, data, advice and opinion. Hundreds of newspapers and ma s. The 500-channel universe has turned out to be a conservative guess — the US alone has 10,000 television channels or more. CNN beams news live around the world 24 hours a day. Cyberspace expands exponentially from the Big Bang of the digital revolution. It would be easy to conclude, in this climate, that the long struggle for freedom of opinion, expression and speech is finally over. But it's not. There's a new battle to be won.



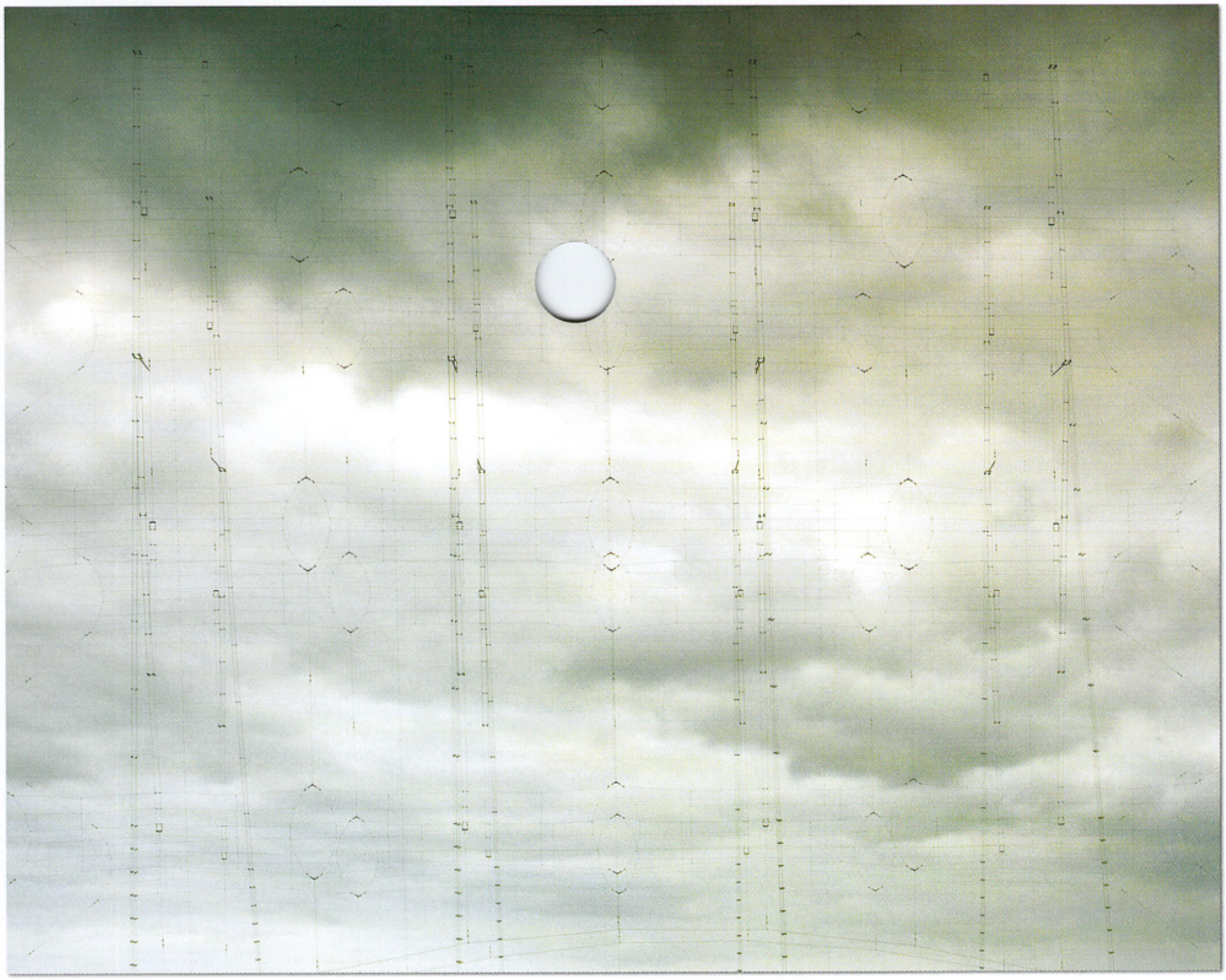
Over the past 20 years, an unprecedented situation has developed with grave implications for freedom and democracy: the emergence of a global communications cartel. Our television, newspapers, magazines, video, radio, music, publishing, film and even the historical photographic images that tell humanity's story, are controlled by an ever-shrinking number of transnational corporations. Giants among giants, megacorps like AOL Time Warner, Disney, News Corporation, Viacom, Sony, Bertelsmann and General Electric, now control over half of all the news and entertainment flows around the planet. Information — the lifeblood of democracy — is systematically commercialized, trivialized, homogenized, politicized.

AFP PHOTO/PETER PARKS

HONG KONG SHOPPING CENTER, MARCH 2003.

we are running on systematically distorted information

Ascension Island is one of the most important eavesdropping sites in the world, part of a global network of electronic eyes and ears called echelon. From there, the National Security Agency can intercept satellite, microwave, fax, telex, cellular, cable and fiber optic communications, which it shares with allied agencies for almost total global coverage. Ascension is also the center of a system of submarine-tracking hydrophones, and the place where the nsa taps into underwater cables that carry almost all of the phone calls that cross the Atlantic. It's one of the only spots in the world where you can see and photograph what's really taking up the effort in the "war on terror."



SIMON NORFOLK

ROBERT WRIGHT, *TIME*, DECEMBER 1999

the dream is turning into a nightmare

For tens of thousands of years, technology has been drawing humanity toward the epic, culminating convergence we're now witnessing.

3000 commercial messages a day rammed into your neo-cortex whether you like it or not...

CENTER FOR ADVANCED IMAGING RESEARCH & BRAIN STIMULATION LABORATORY, MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

NOISE

SPAM

COMMERCIALIZED SCHOOLS

AD CREEP

MEDIA MONOPOLY

POSTMODERNISM

CYNICISM

EROSION OF EMPATHY

We are living through a frightening historical moment: ecosystems and psychosystems are starting to collapse. Our 3,000-year march toward freedom has stalled, just as the march of technology accelerates wildly. The War on Terror is veering out of control and a cool fascismo pervades the "first" world. In the "third" world, a desperate scramble will decide who will and will not have nuclear weapons. "Truth," "Right," "Good" and "Evil" are now cultural commodities, rammed down our throats by forces we no longer comprehend or control.

ILLUSTRATIONS © ANDREAS TOPFER

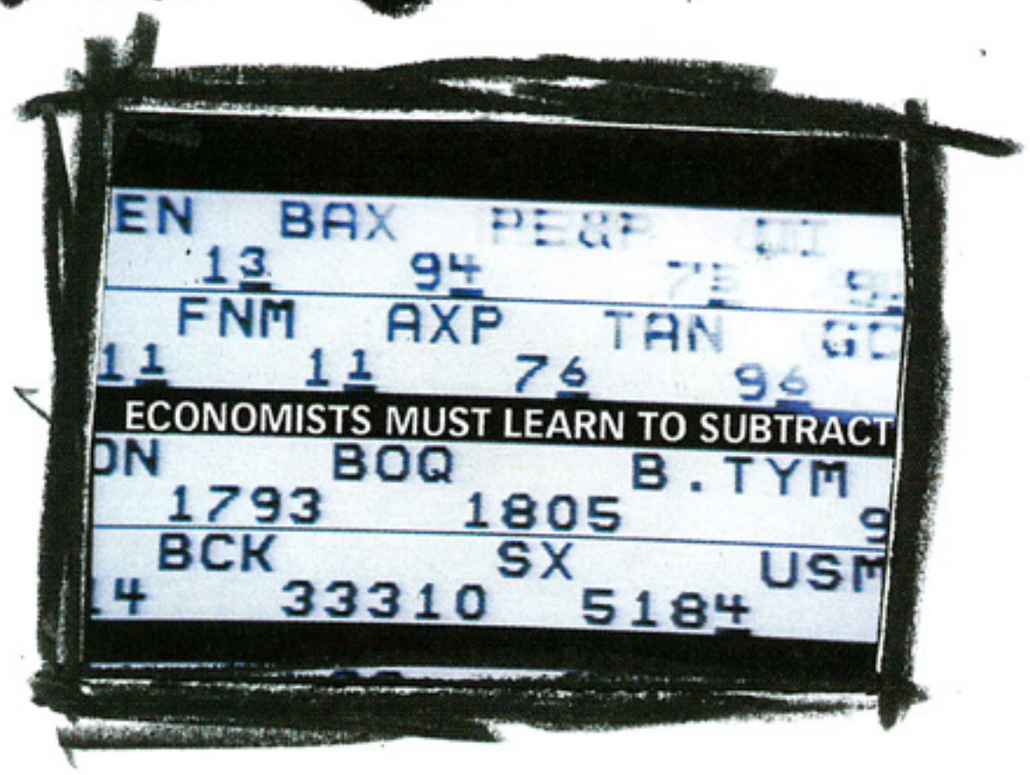
"WHY ARE YOU PROTESTING?"

"Because ever since I was a baby crawling around the TV set I've been suckered, lied to and propagandized. The kind of psychological abuse I've been subjected to may not be as bad as sexual abuse but, believe me, it leaves lifelong scars nonetheless. I feel empty, soulless, mindfucked . . . and now it's payback time."

ANDREW STERN

- WTO PROTEST, CANCUN, MEXICO, SEPT. 2003

we want access



Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has a subtle, hidden flaw: it affirms only the passive right "to receive and impart" information.

The active right of access to the media is not affirmed. We have freedom in theory, but not in practice.

Our children will see the mental and physical as two faces of the same reality. They will understand that the loss of a language, tradition or heritage – the forgetting of even a single good idea – is as great a loss to future generations as a biological species going extinct.

More and more people are making the connection between media clutter and their own mental health. Attaching emotions to logos - branding - is increasingly being revealed as mental exploitation. We are starting to understand the meaning of life in a toxic culture. Soon a threshold will be reached and the $450-billion-a-year worldwide advertising complex will come tumbling down. It will end up a nuts-and-bolts industry, an everyday service sector like engineering or dentistry.

Once people start making the connection between commercial clutter and their own mental health, the mental environmental movement will take off

ONE corp owning 1000 radio stations is a monumental TRADEGY ... it's a tradegy of the mental commons... millions of people are diminished daily.

Freedom in the mental realm is hard to define exactly, but it has a lot to do with privacy – the right to walk into a bank or a mall or a sports stadium without having your picture taken, to work in an office without having your emails monitored, to drive around town without being followed by video cameras. It has to do with dignity – the feeling that you can move through society as an individual, alive and unique, instead of as a datapoint in some national security or corporate marketing system. It means having a voice, an opportunity to join the debate about climate change, energy policy or the war on terror. To have not only the option of turning off your TV if you don't like the program, but to change the program itself, to change the way your local TV station covers the news, to have that station's license revoked if enough people in your community don't like the way it's being run.

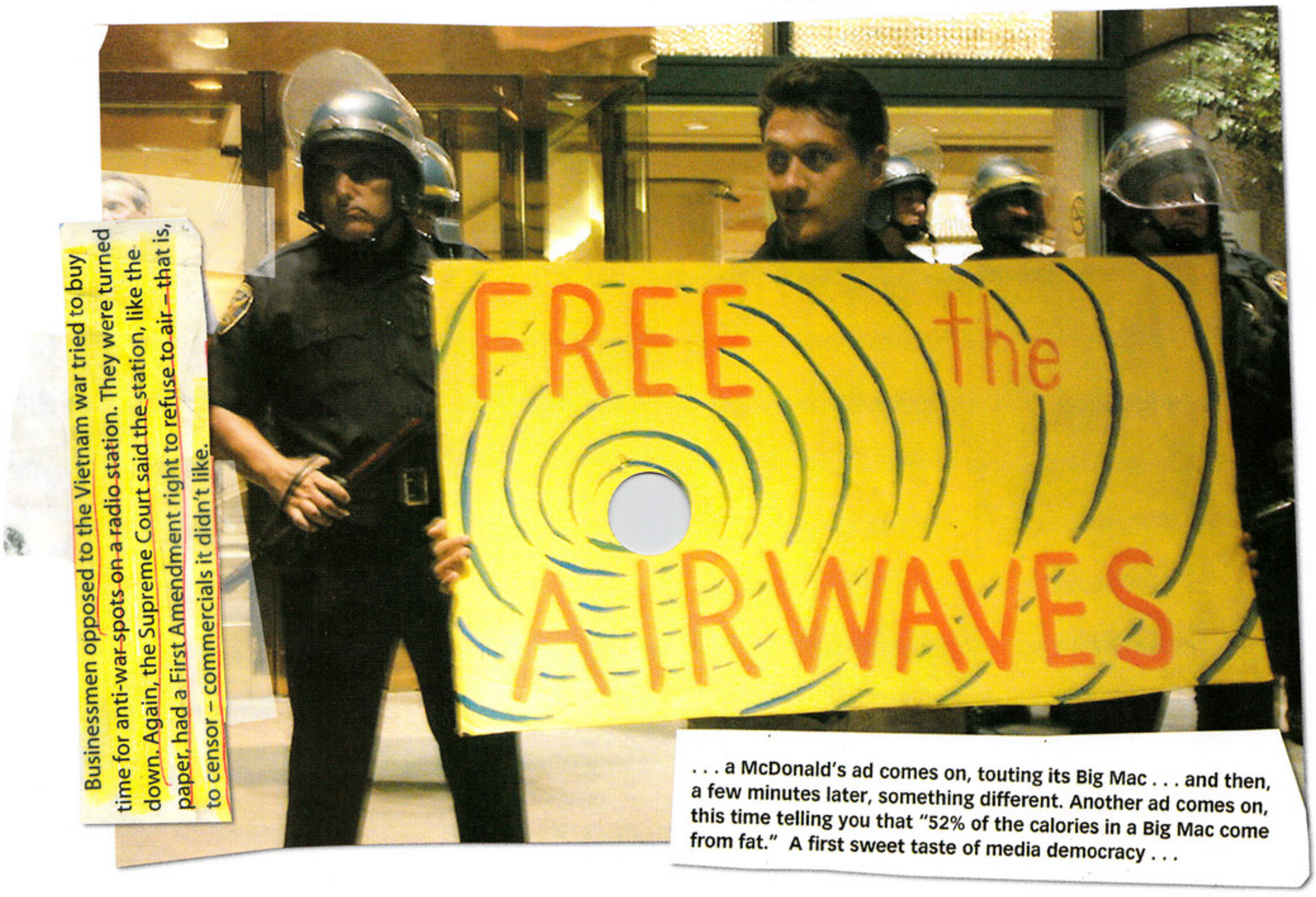
Mental Ecology

eco <—> psycho
pollution <—> noise
biotoxin <—> infotoxin
toxic environment <—> toxic culture
ecological collapse <—> mental breakdown

Let's just come right out and say it: mixing communication with commercialism was a fundamental mistake. . . our ultimate undoing, psychologically, socially and ecologically. The job we have ahead of us is to draw a clear line between commercial and human expression, to recreate our communications system – to restore the mental environment.

THE BATTLE FOR MEDIA CARTA

#1. We break the corporate advertising monopoly



Businessmen opposed to the Vietnam war tried to buy time for anti-war spots on a radio station. They were turned down. Again, the Supreme Court said the station, like the paper, had a First Amendment right to refuse to air – that is, to censor – commercials it didn't like.

. . . a McDonald's ad comes on, touting its Big Mac . . . and then, a few minutes later, something different. Another ad comes on, this time telling you that "52% of the calories in a Big Mac come from fat." A first sweet taste of media democracy . . .

Here's how it starts: with a fight that anyone can believe in . . . an action that shows this media system for the madhouse it really is. How bad have things gotten with our public airwaves? So bad that you and I can't even buy a piece of airtime.

The first shot for Media Carta is the legal right to walk into your local TV or radio station, put down your money and say, "Give me 30 seconds of airtime, I've got something to say." Right now, you can't do it. The networks don't own the public airwaves — they lease them from us, the people — but there is no such thing as free speech in the corporate media. The networks are the gatekeepers: they decide what messages do and don't get heard. They are the world's most powerful censors.

Here's how it plays out. You can use sex to sell beer. You can use psychological tricks to sell junk food to kids. You can use hype to sell cars. You can use lies to sell war. What you cannot do, however, is turn the tables and speak out against the companies that are doing the selling. In a totalitarian system, you aren't allowed to talk back to the government; in the capitalist system, you can't talk back to the sponsor.

The first free-speech challenge against this corporate censorship will be launched in Canada, early in 2004. It will be followed soon after by a First Amendment legal action in the United States. For more than a decade, Adbusters has been trying to buy airtime for its subvertisements and uncommercials — short social marketing messages like the ones peppered throughout these pages. The list of networks that have shut us out includes CBS, NBC, ABC, FOX, MTV, CTV and CBC Newsworld. As the legal fight unfolds, watch for similar battles in the UK, Australia, France, Italy . . . Japan . . . Mexico . . .

In a totalitarian system, you aren't allowed to talk back to the government; in the capitalist system, you can't talk back to the sponsor.

We do not accept advertising for controversial issues and now must reject all the spots submitted.

– MTV networks, manager of commercial clearance, Kristie Carlson

We're in the business to make money, and we're in the business to sell our customers products. So why would we come out and say 'don't buy anything' and affect the economy?

– CTV Canada, group director of national sales, Al Hudak

'm sure we're not the only venue who has blocked you. I know. I've been kicking around this business for a long time.

– Fox Broadcast Corporation, executive director of broadcast standards, Darlene Lieblich

We don't sell airtime for issue ads because that would allow the people with the financial resources to control public policy.

– CBS Boston, public affairs manager, Donald Lowery

Our president did not want to air anything that is anti-TV. And he has dealt with you guys in the past, according to him.

– CanWest Global Canada, business development executive, Carmen Lago

Your spots] are counterproductive to what e do. We sell advertising.

– CHUM Television Canada, national sales representative, Susan Orr

<www.mediacarta.org>

We just came to the conclusion that it is not in our business model to advertise this campaign.

– Alliance Atlantis Canada, national accounts executive, Jean Bronzy

We could have a debate about capitalism, but at the end of the day, the commercial channels are there to make a profit.

– UK Broadcasting Advertising Clearance Center, executive, Duane Dedman

[Airing your spots would] create some real angst with our key advertisers and clients and agencies.

– Channel 7 Australia, sales manager, Eddie Reginato

We think these [spots] are controversial and we're not convinced they would be in our interest.

– Oracle South Africa, general manager, Chris Hitchens

We are not willing to say ['buy nothing'] to our viewers. I think that's the last thing to say for us.

– Television Broadcasting Service Japan, Jin Yokoi

You know what I feel like saying? Suck it up, it's the real world.

– ABC, vice president of advertising, Julie Hoover.

Adbusters Free-Speech Airtime Project: Tim Walker, campaign manager; in collaboration with Casseurs de Pub, France; Greenpeace Germany, Australia, USA and Canada; Indymedia Seattle, Washington DC and New York City (The Independent); Reclaim the Media, Seattle; Gabi Hadl and Kato Taizo, Japan; Earthsave, Canada; Buy Nothing Day, UK; Laugh It Off, South Africa.

THE BATTLE FOR MEDIA CARTA

#2

We start taking back the public airwaves

A meme is a unit of information (a catchphrase, a concept, a tune, a notion of fashion, philosophy or politics) that leaps from brain to brain to brain. Memes compete with one another for replication, and are passed down through a population much the same way genes pass through a species. Potent memes can change minds, alter behavior, catalyze collective mindshifts and transform cultures – which is why meme warfare has become the geopolitical battle of our information age. Whoever has the memes has the power.

How much mental space is just corporate clutter? And how much is nourishing, crunchy, head-to-head speech?

So we've launched a campaign to win the right to buy broadcast airtime and duke it out meme-to-meme with the corporate image factory. That's a good start. But something still doesn't make sense. We own the public airwaves, right? So why do we have to pay — or beg — to get our viewpoints on the air?

Call it the Two-Minute Media Revolution. We tell the media regulators that every commercial broadcasting license should include a rule that reserves two minutes of every hour for public use, free of charge.

What will it look like when the airwaves are open to uncensored messages from all and any takers? No one knows for sure. But the lesson of the internet is that more voices equals better media, no matter how rough, no matter how wild. It's called a free marketplace of ideas, and it works.

There are dozens of ways to start building public access into our system, from internet and video "speakers' corners," to first-come, first-served public announcements. How the networks do it is up to them as much as it is up to us. Just as long as it's free, uncensored, 100-percent public access — and a make-or-break requirement of every broadcasting license.

Two minutes every hour: a first experiment in hands-on ownership of the public airwaves . . . and a glimpse beyond the corporate media dictatorship we've been living under for too long.

in 1969, the Supreme Court asserted that "it is the right of the viewers, not the right of the broadcasters, which is paramount."

New Message

Send Chat Attach Address Fonts Colors Save As Draft

To:

Cc:

Subject:

Account: Signature: None

EMAIL TO:
MICHAEL POWELL
Chairman, US Federal Communications Commission

Dear Chairman Powell,

It is my unwavering conviction that the public interest will best be served if the radio and television licenses that you grant from now on contain the "two minute" clause: a requirement that two minutes of every broadcast hour be reserved for public use.

I ask that you, as the regulator of our public airwaves, work with broadcasters and the public to establish a system of direct public access for the two-minute takeback. I believe this to be a necessary next step in the evolution of a democratic media with the power to reinvigorate public debate and contribute to solving many of the problems we are struggling with in our country and in the world today.

Please let me know what action you intend to take. We, the people, are waiting.

Signed,

AUSTRALIA: David Flint, Chairman, Australia Broadcasting Authority <info@aba.gov.au>

CANADA: Charles Dalfin, Chairperson, Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission <charles.dalfin@crtc.gc.ca>

FRANCE: Anes Vincent-Deray, Chairman, Conseil Supérieur de L'audiovisuel <http://www.csa.fr/outils/contact/contacteznous_formulaire.php>

GERMANY: There is no central national authority. Consult with your local Laender.
Japan: Aso Taro, Minister of Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications <http://www.soumu.go.jp/english/opinions/opinions.html>

SOUTH AFRICA: Mandla Langa, Chairperson, Independent Broadcasting Authority <theiba@wn.apc.org>

UK: Steven Carter, Chief Executive, Independent Television Commission mediaoffice@ofcom.org.uk

MEXICO: Arrendondo Martinez Jorge, Presidencia, Comisión Federal de Telecomunicaciones <jarredondo@cft.gob.mx>

ITALY: Enzo Cheli, President, Communications Regulatory Authority (Agcom) <info@agcom.it>

Whoever controls communications, controls both consciousness and social organization.

THE BATTLE FOR MEDIA CARTA

#3 We break up the media conglomerates, one by one

Are you sick and tired of your local TV programming? Almost everyone is. In Boston, people decided to do something about it. They filed a petition to the Federal Communications Commission [FCC] to protest the shoddy news broadcasts of their local station. They wanted WHDH-TV to have its license revoked — and they won. WHDH faded to black and a new station under new management was born.

That was 35 years ago. No one since has repeated the Bostonian revolt.

So why don't we do that again? Let's identify the worst infotainment offenders and pull the plug on their public licenses. Let's send a message to Rupert Murdoch and Clear Channel and the rest of the media dinosaurs: the public is once again taking charge of the public interest.

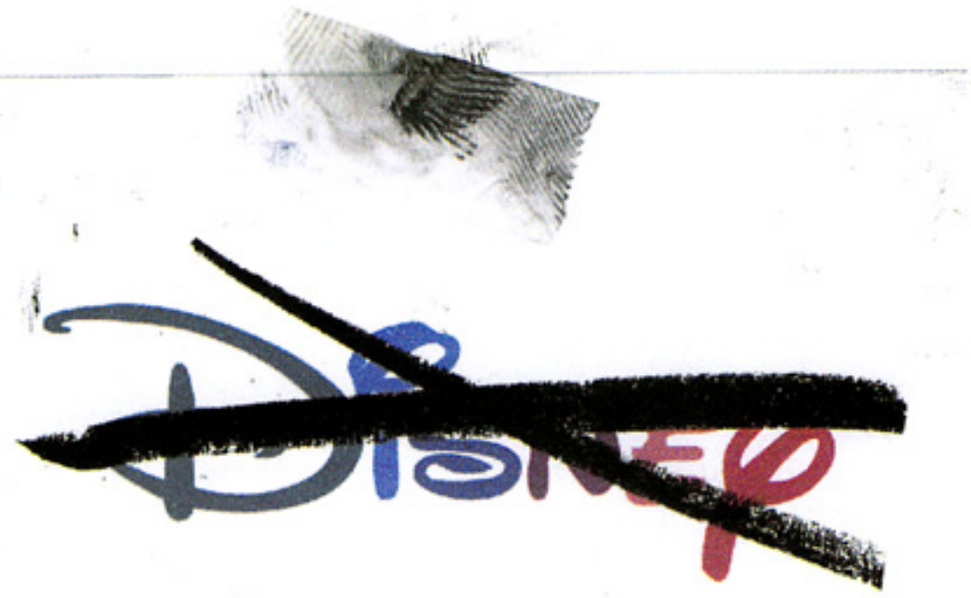
It's media democracy, plain and simple. If we're going to break the cartel that controls information flows across each country and around the world, we need to act at every level from the local to the global. We start pulling licenses in any city where one media company controls the largest local outlets. We push anti-trust actions to reverse a decade of media mergers that turned mega-corporations into unimaginable juggernauts like AOL Time Warner and Vivendi-NBC, each with more money and power than most nations worldwide.

But we don't have to rely on media regulators and government lawsuits. We have an even better tool at our disposal: the corporate charter. Every corporation has a legal document that brings it to life and lays out the terms of its existence. Originally, charters were meant to keep corporations from overstepping the bounds of the public interest — and there's no reason we cannot renew that power. If any media corporation refuses to make way for real public access, we launch a campaign to revoke its corporate charter, the equivalent of a death sentence for corporations.

NO ONE CORPORATION SHOULD EVER BE ALLOWED TO OWN A NEWSPAPER AND A TV STATION IN THE SAME CITY.

the media megacorps have colonized the global mindscape and developed it into a theme park – a jolly, terrifyingly homogenized Las Vegas of the mind

Ninety percent of the top 50 cable stations and 20 percent of the top internet sites are owned by the same media conglomerates.



One corporation owning 1,200 radio stations is a monumental tragedy – a tragedy of the mental commons. The lives of millions of people are diminished daily.

If Americans suddenly decided to break up the media monopolies with powerful antitrust legislation; or to reserve a few minutes of every TV broadcast hour for public-generated advocacy messages; or to deploy some other participatory strategy that gives individuals and groups a voice on the public airwaves, American culture would heave.

Never heard of media concentration? Guess why: media concentration.

Never heard of media concentration? Guess why: media concentration.

MEDIA CARTA

Endgame

Every age has its human-rights battle, and every social movement has to fight one. The civil rights movement, feminism, environmentalism, the global justice movement — each has reshaped the way we understand human freedom.

Media Carta is the human-rights battle of our information age. It is about us, the people, singing the songs and telling the stories and generating culture from the bottom up, instead of having it spoon-fed from the top down.

This is a fight that we cannot avoid. Without a media democracy — meaningful public access to the most powerful forms of communication — we cannot raise healthy children, create good public policy or hold elections that matter. We lose the power to shape our own consciousness, our own future. We lose even the power to imagine what that future may look like.

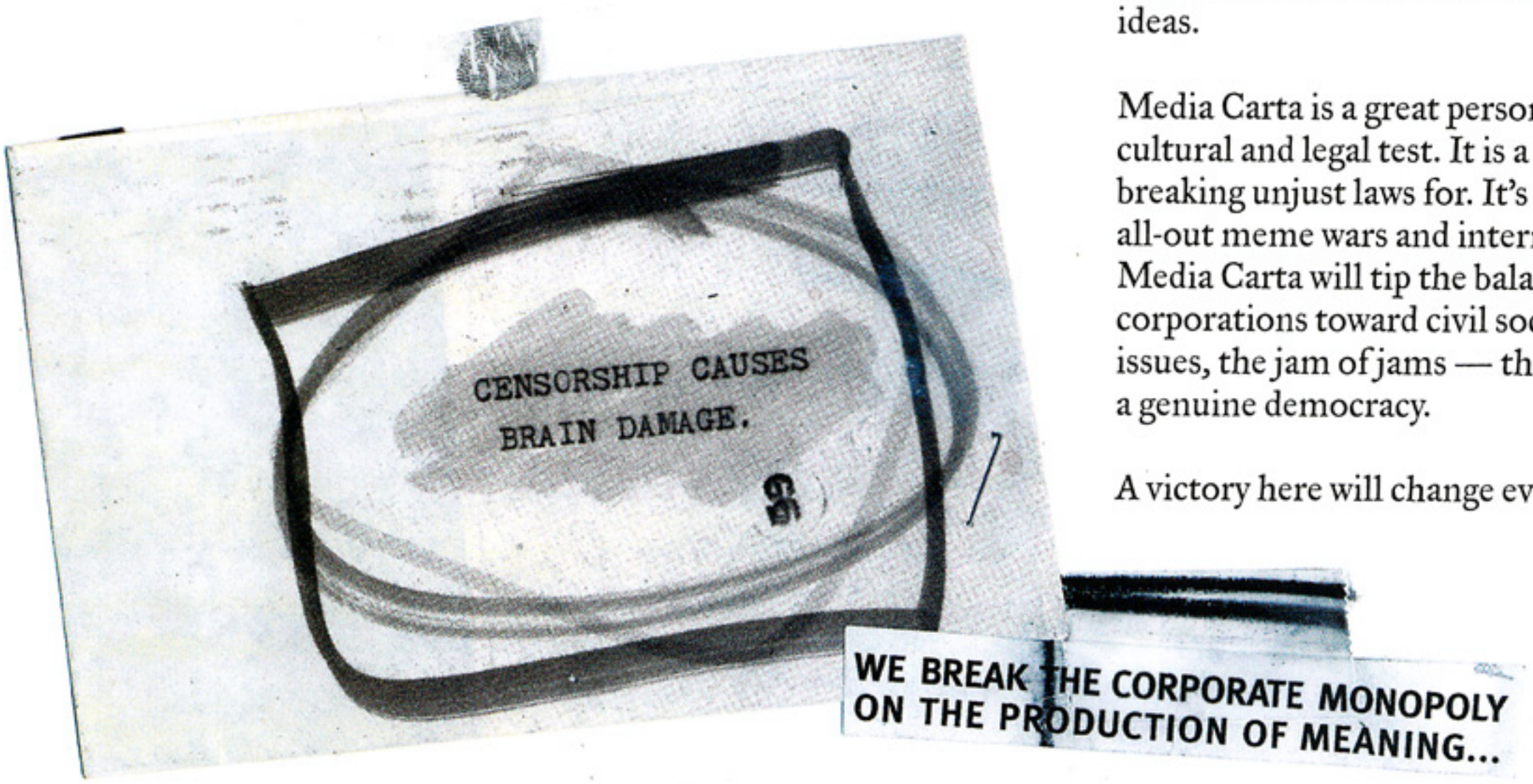
We need a total revolution in the way we relate to the media. We want access. We want public communications. We want a fair marketplace of ideas.

Media Carta is a great personal, intellectual, social, cultural and legal test. It is a freedom fight worth breaking unjust laws for. It's worth street protests, all-out meme wars and international days of action. Media Carta will tip the balance of power from corporations toward civil society. It is the issue of issues, the jam of jams — the ultimate struggle for a genuine democracy.

A victory here will change everything.

Kalle Lasn

- End of slavery
- Universal suffrage
- End of child labor
- Education rights
- Religious freedom
- Civil rights
- Women s rights
- Disabled people s rights
- Gay rights
- Environmental justice
- Animal rights
- Intergenerational rights
- Communication rights



MEDIA CARTA

We, the undersigned, are troubled by the way information flows and the way meaning is produced in our society.

WE HAVE LOST CONFIDENCE in what we are seeing, hearing and reading: too much infotainment and not enough news; too many outlets telling the same stories; too much commercialism and too much hype. Every day, this commercial information system distorts our view of the world.

WE HAVE LOST FAITH in the institutions of the mass media. A handful of corporations now control more than half the information networks around the world. At a time when people worldwide face hunger, social disruption, war and ecological collapse, only those who know how to walk the walk, talk the talk or pay big bucks are getting their message across.

WE HAVE LOST HOPE that our national media regulators will act in the public interest. Essential rules limiting media ownership and concentration are being scrapped, while rules protecting local content and access are diluted.

WE HAVE LOST PATIENCE waiting for reform.

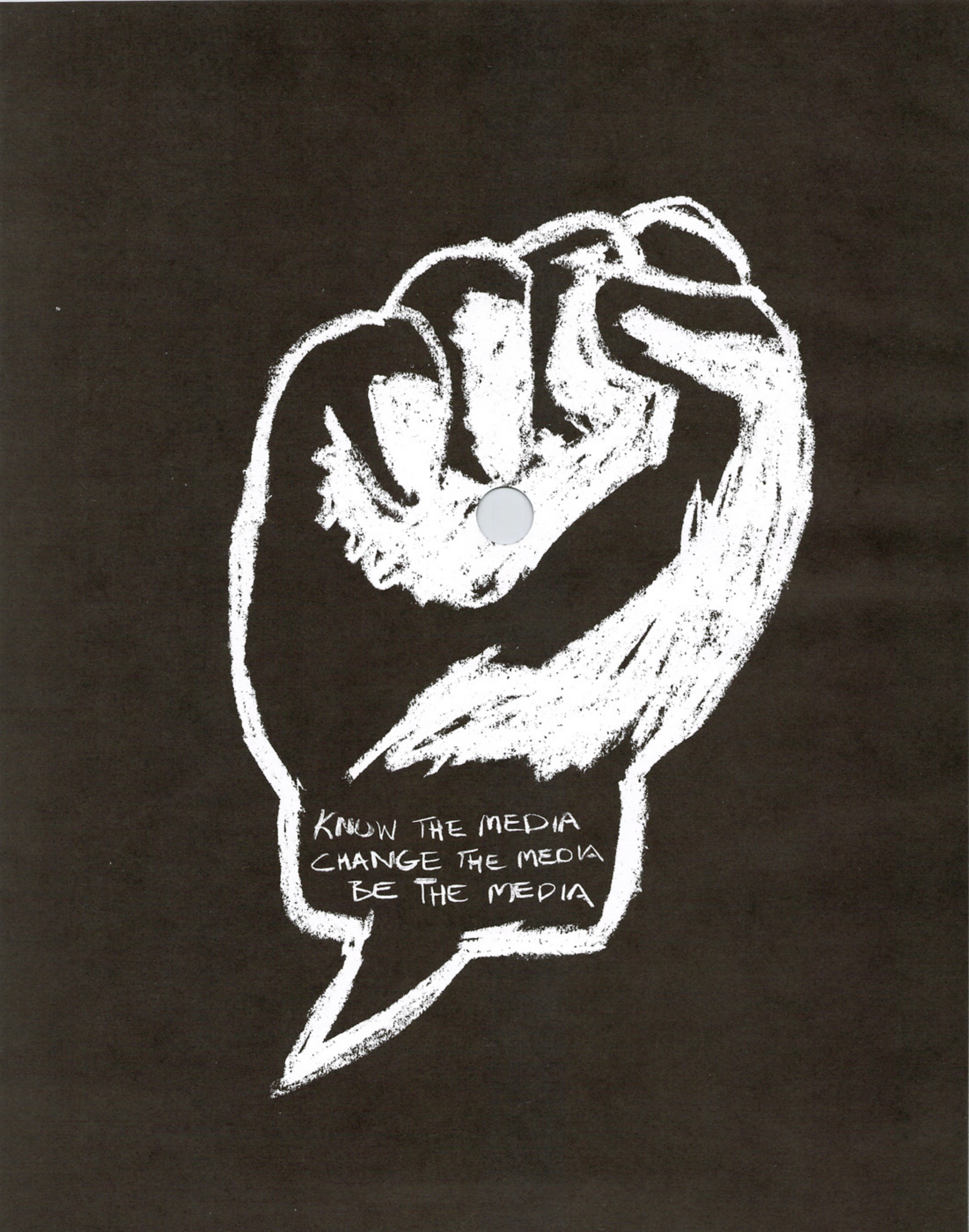
WE IMAGINE A DIFFERENT SYSTEM — a media democracy. We see great promise in the open communications of the internet and want that openness expanded into every form of media. We envision a global system of communications that has as its foundation the direct, democratic participation of citizens. To this end, we demand the timely transfer of key media sources back to the people.

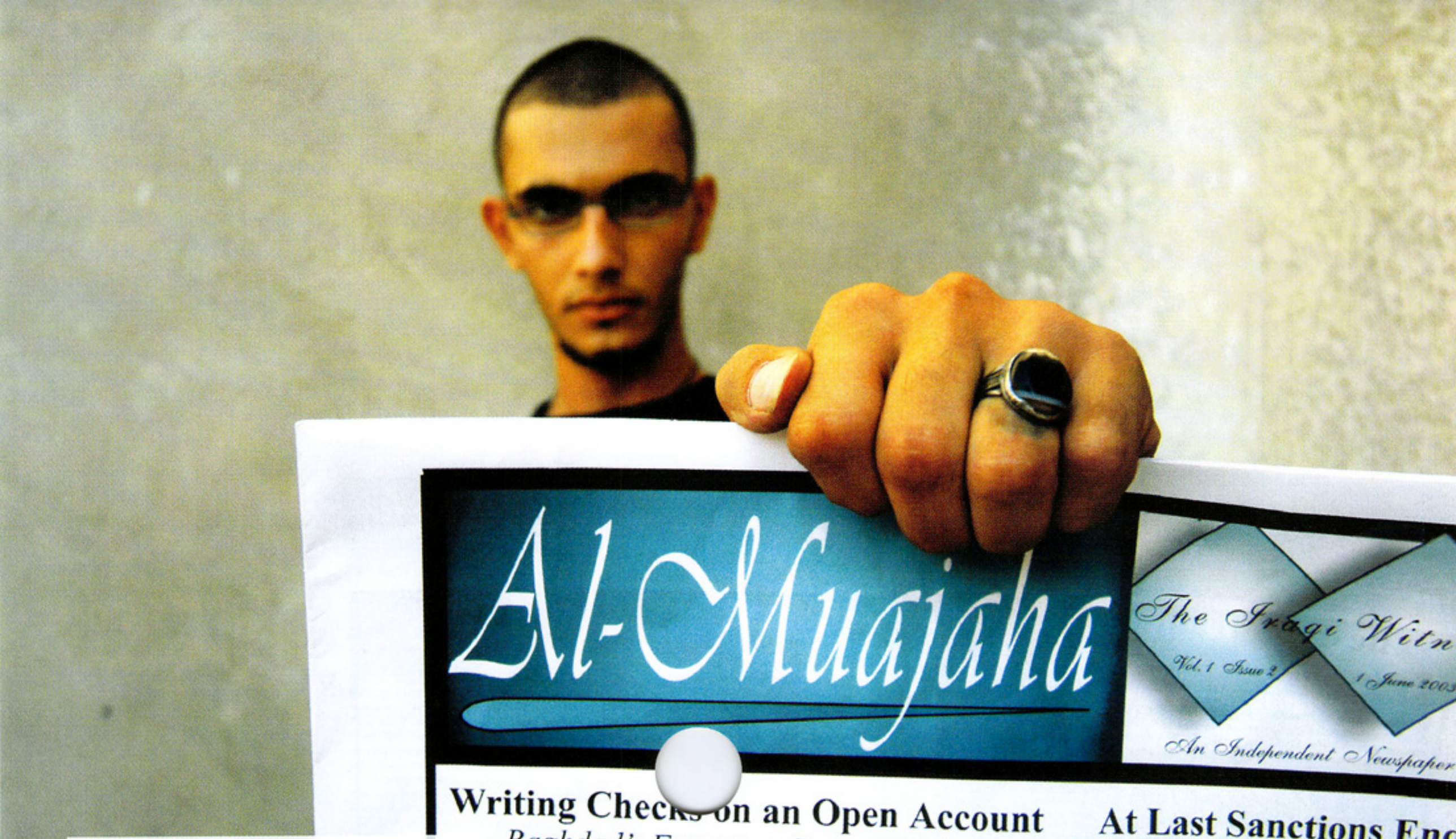
As a start, we demand the right to buy radio and television airtime under the same rules and conditions as advertising agencies. We ask our media regulators to set aside two minutes of every broadcast hour for citizen-produced messages. We want the six largest media corporations in the world broken up into smaller units.

What we ultimately seek is a new human right for our information age, one that empowers freedom of speech with the right to access the media. This new human right is: The Right to Communicate.

WE HEREBY LAUNCH A MOVEMENT to enshrine The Right to Communicate in the constitutions of all free nations, and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Sign the media carta at www.mediacarta.org


KNOW THE MEDIA
CHANGE THE MEDIA
BE THE MEDIA



ANDREW STERN

THE STORIES IN AL-MUAJAHA, IRAQ'S first independent newspaper, are the kind you won't hear on CNN – like the one about the US soldiers who "liberated" a Baghdad institution believed to be full of torture victims. By the time the Americans realized it was actually a functioning orphanage, many of the children were living on the streets and hooked on sniffing glue.

The first issue began to come together just a week after the war officially ended. A group of seven students, working with the peace group Voices in the Wilderness, created *Al-Muajaha* as a forum for Iraqis to freely debate current issues. Poetic rants like "Wake Up O' People of Iraq" rail against the sudden influx of pornography and alcohol in the country, while joking snippets hint at where Saddam might be hiding. The goal: to help the world understand Iraq, and help Iraq understand the world.

Most of the paper's 30 staff members learned journalism as translators and "fixers" for the reporters that descended on Iraq during the war. Their base is a building named *Beit Al-Bacher* – Iraqi slang for "Tomorrow's House." It's a cynical reference to the typical answer to questions like, "When will there be water?" and "When will there be electricity?" "*Bacher*"– tomorrow. But it's also a statement of hope for a better future. Beit Al-Bacher buzzes with activity: writers and editors hang out, meet and crash when they're working late on a story. Debates rage, visiting media activists provide training sessions and neighborhood children come to talk with the newspaper staff.

The pages of *Al-Muajaha* capture the confusion on the streets of post-war Iraq. "I never expected that Saddam Hussein would just disappear like that, and that all of his glory and memories would fade away in a moment," says 19-year-old reporter Waleed Rabi'a. Almost everyone in Baghdad has a story of a friend or family member killed or tortured under Saddam's regime. Speaking your mind in public or even in private was almost impossible. Then one day Saddam was gone. One Iraqi translator described the pre-war experience as like living in darkness. "Suddenly there is a light so bright and you can see so much. What do you do?"

Walking in Baghdad is like being immersed in an eerie dreamscape, full of ruined buildings, smashed-up pictures of Saddam and young American kids holding big guns on street corners and yelling at each other to "rock and roll!"

Al-Muajaha is a response – an antidote to the unreality.

It is increasingly clear to Iraqis that their well-being is not a serious American priority. Since the end of the war, little has being done about the frequent power cuts and lack of clean water. Meanwhile, US soldiers are detaining more people, and attacks on civilians are on the rise. It's common to hear Iraqis cursing Americans in the same breath as they curse Saddam. For many, living conditions are as desperate as they've ever been and are only getting worse.

To ensure that the inside story of Iraq gets out to the world, *Al-Muajaha* publishes in both Arabic and English. It has also made links with the indy media movement and has its own website (*www.almuajaha.com*). Media activists from around the world have jumped in to help with money and equipment, thrilled by the idea of an independent Baghdad voice.

"We're trying to make our dreams come true of having a real and realistic community," says Rabi'a. "We are

An *Al-Muajaha* reporter holds up the first issue on the roof of Beit Al-Bacher, Baghdad, Iraq

Shell casings are collected for their precious metal content, Sadr City, Iraq

trying to fill the gap that happened between Iraq and the whole world under sanctions."

And of course, they're making history.

"To see your first issue published in the streets and you worked it out with nothing, it's a very, very precious thing for us."

Andrew Stern is a media activist and journalist who worked with Al-Muajaha *in Baghdad. He is part of the editorial collective Notes from Nowhere, which has just produced the book* We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism *(Verso, 2003).* *<www.WeAreEverywhere.org>*

Support *Al-Muajaha*: tax-deductible donations can be made through the Urbana-Champaign Indymedia Center, ATTN: Treasurer 218, West Main St., Suite 110, Urbana, IL, 61801, USA. Checks should be made out to "UCIMC" and have "IMC-Baghdad" in the memo line. Or donate online at <www.ucimc.org/info/display/support/index.php>.

my social sciences teacher told us we had to watch the news and make a connection between current events and our own lives. but i couldn't. all i could think about was how so much is going on in the world and how my life is so boring. i'm just stuck here and my life hasn't changed at all. it was so depressing i started wishing something tragic would happen to me. my friend laura's house burned down last year. nobody got hurt but at least she had something to talk about. it's stupid i guess but i want to be part of something real too, you know?

PHOTOS: ANDREW STERN

A boy lies in a burn unit after picking up an "UXO," or unexploded ordinance, Baghdad, Iraq

WE KNOW WE'VE ENTERED A KIND OF WONDERLAND WHEN the media start reporting stories that inform the informed about the uninformed. That's what happened this summer, when the *Washington Post* and others printed polls showing that some 70 percent of Americans think Saddam Hussein was behind the September 11 attacks. The navel gazing began immediately: how had the media failed so completely to let people know the truth?

Maybe 70 percent of Americans don't really care if Saddam was involved with the Al Qaeda plot or not (and for the record, there is no evidence of any connection). As White House correspondent Carl Cannon says, many people think the world today is just too small for dictators. He wonders if most Americans looked at Saddam and thought, let's nail "the biggest asshole of all first."

In public statements during the push for war with Iraq early in 2003, Bush officials repeatedly suggested a link and were rarely called to the mat by the press. The obvious question is why, and the obvious group to ask is the journalists. I'm one of them – covering this administration on a daily basis – and if you think some of my colleagues are lazy, decadent or timid, you're right. Some of us are also outraged. The reason you don't see this outrage in the public domain, however, is that most of us aren't free to comment. We're reporters. We play the skeptic behind the scenes, leaving it to the pundits and editorial writers to protest the spin.

We're not blind, though. Regarding the alleged Iraq-Al Qaeda link, many echo the opinion of Dan Schorr, who has covered Washington longer than I've been alive. "It is quite clear that it's a hoax," says Schorr, now the senior political analyst for National Public Radio. After the administration failed to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, he said, it repositioned the suspected Al Qaeda link as the primary justification for invasion. What could a journalist do about this brash rewriting of history, other than continue to report what the officials were saying, and leave it to the public to make up its own mind about the sudden tectonic shift?

Too pat an answer? Maybe. But consider how hard it is to get "real" information from a White House that has mastered information control. Bush sticks to the script his advisers write, and so do the advisers themselves. My colleague, Mark Kukis, has covered the Bush and Clinton White Houses, and remembers asking any Clinton aide to add nuance to the president's public comments. Clinton's staff always obliged; Bush's handlers never do. "The discipline is remarkable," says Kukis.

Sometimes, I even think the media is an afterthought for Bush and his team. I once received an announcement about an official press briefing a half hour after the briefing had begun. Some journalists play along silently with this maddening business, fearing they'll lose access to crucial sources. Without them, we have little to report. And we are all afraid of being branded "partisan" – a label often given to aggressive reporters. Thus, we are drawn into bed with the people we cover. Witness the Hollywood-meets-Washington atmosphere of the annual White House Correspondents Dinner. Celebrities, celebrity journalists and the high officials we cover, all cavorting together in black tie.

At the after-party for this year's event, the buzz centered on a certain NBC anchor's visible panty line and how close she was sitting on the couch to billionaire entrepreneur Richard Branson. Or how one cabinet secretary, cocked on martinis, was petting the arm of a media company employee.

It happened, and many delighted in it. "We've joined a class of people that we should be watching," Schorr says.

There was a day when reporters didn't command million-dollar salaries, and maybe with money comes a loss of tenacity. You don't need a poll to prove there's a dearth of hard reporting on the White House. Even after the president disavowed the Saddam-September 11 link, the press did not widely or prominently report his statement.

I honestly don't know why. Maybe we're reluctant to appear biased for holding officials accountable to the truth. Maybe we're afraid, period. When Helen Thomas, the most esteemed White House correspondent in history, went on record saying Bush is "the worst president in American history," the White House kicked her out of her honored front row seat in the briefing room and refused to let her ask the first question – the traditional privilege of the most senior correspondent. That sent a message: if they can beat up on Helen Thomas, nobody is sacred.

But there's a crack in the Bush administration's armor.

Just as the *Post* revealed 70 percent of Americans believed the false link, Bush's public support began to slip. It continued to slide into the fall, when his approval rating dropped back to September 10, 2001, levels. Journalists sense the weakness. If the president is on the ropes, and if his opponents attack – giving us something to report – you'll see more stories about disconnects, discrepancies and brazen behavior. Public opinion emboldens journalism. "The rose is beginning to fade," Schorr says. "The media is always good at fighting the battle when it's half won."

Shane Harris

Try keeping your eyes open for 30 hours without blinking.

Q: Medieval archers were looked down upon not only because they were mostly untrained peasants, but also because the equipment they used was ineffectual. The archer also lacked the romantic stature of the knight: shooting from far away seemed cowardly, whereas face-to-face sword combat had an aura of honor. The situation changed with the introduction of the longbow, which became lethally effective. Consequently, the archer's stature increased. Today, critics charge that using unmanned drones is cowardly because they strike from a distance. Will the drones controlled by servicemen ever lose their stigma, as the archers did? Clearly the drones proved effective in battle. And yet, the image of the serviceman controlling a drone does not evoke the same humanity as the archer.

A: I agree that in military history questions of 'honor' have always influenced decisions to adopt a particular weapon. And distance per se was not always the main reason: early rifles were not particularly liked due to their increased precision, and the practices this led to (the emergence of snipers) were seen as dishonorable. Yet, once Napoleon had changed the paradigm from battles of attrition to battles of annihilation, harassing the enemy via snipers became quite acceptable. Even more problematic was the effect of the rifle and the conoidal bullet in changing traditional hierarchies as infantry could now defeat artillery, forcing the latter to hide behind defensive positions (a hiding which must have carried a bit of stigma at first but that went away fast). I think the use of drones will only be seen as problematic from the 'honor' point of view for a very short time."

Excerpted with permission from an interview with Manuel de Landa, philosopher and author of the bestselling War in the Age of Intelligent Machines. *Originally published by the electronic journal CTHEORY <www.ctheory.net>.*

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From *Jane's Defence Weekly*, June 2003

NORTHROP GRUMMAN DEFINING THE FUTURE™

Integrated Systems

THAT NIGHT, I WAS A BIT DRUNK. We sat around drinking in honor of Daniel, who came all the way from France and made *aliyah* so he could faithfully serve the country, the army and Tali the female military social worker. We uncorked a Johnny Walker that Tali's brother gave her, and we were listening to the Doors while smoking some hashish. You can't be a real Nahal Corps soldier without drinking Johnny Walker, listening to the Doors or smoking hashish. And a select few partake in all three . . .

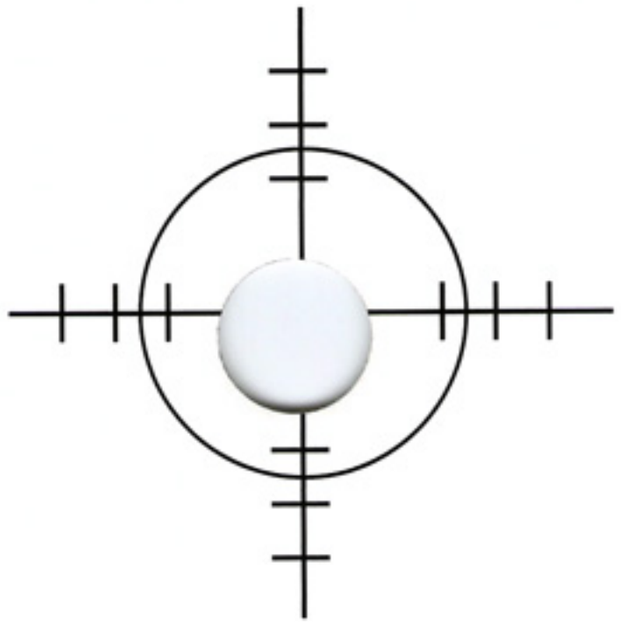
We'd just gotten back from Lebanon, and after a week of R&R we were sent right to the occupied territories, to Gaza.

There's no place like Gaza. With its blue sea and excellent hummus that – even if you include a ton of pita bread, cracked olives and French fries – won't cost you more than 10 shekels, and you'll still get back some change. Let me tell you about these Gazan olives. First of all, they are the most bitter in the entire world. Gazans say that the olives get their bitterness from life in the Gaza Strip. From the pressure of our occupation and the previous one and the one before that. And not only are these olives bitter, but they can drive you crazy with their saltiness. And that is because of the tears of the Gaza women. Tears they shed in the olive groves seep through into the olives.

The Gaza women are the true heroes. While the men are busy tending to the miseries of life and looking for ways to liberate themselves from this or that occupation, the women are busy taking care of the kids, preparing the food and working in the groves. In the groves they have quality time. There, all alone, they cry for their youth and for their dreams; for the sons who were killed or sent to prison; for the sons who will be killed or will be sent to prison. And the olives – they take it all in, which, contrary to general opinion, makes them taste great and go very well with whisky.

Suddenly I thought about my mother, who doesn't sleep at night. I tried to explain to her that all we did was drink whisky and eat cracked olives. But she didn't believe me, my mother, and began to cry.

She said she was scared. That she had bad dreams. Mom and her dreams. I told her not to worry and not to cry, because if she did,



the water in the Israeli aquifer would get salty and it would be her fault. This is what happened in Gaza, and that's why they are oppressed and occupied. It didn't help, though. There's no one like Mom.

Tali said that Jim Morrison was King and started dancing. She was so beautiful, Tali! With her direct manners and her flat stomach and her breasts with the nipples that stood up like two small hills in the prairie. Daniel joined her and they kissed. I sat by myself and thought how Daniel was a victim of life. A human being whose life got screwed up and no one was paying attention.

Last week, during the demonstration near the Green Mosque, Daniel accidentally fired some shots into the crowd and some pregnant Gaza woman was killed. I ran to her, trying to provide some help, but she was already dying. She gave me a sad look and had tears in her eyes. She had a fifth-month belly, and I knew she'd lost the baby.

She was bleeding heavily from the abdomen and it took me a while to insert the IV and start the transfusion. She died at 6 p.m.

Roni the military doctor and I began to cry. Manny, the driver, mumbled that she was just an Arab. Dead, so what? But he, too, was sad and I could see he was having a hard time with it. I kissed him on his forehead and told him to drive to headquarters. No one said a word to Daniel.

There was an investigation and it was decided that the shooting had been a mistake. An accidental bullet. But no one talked to Daniel. I told Roni that Daniel needs some time off, that we need to talk to him, that he seemed strange. But Roni was busy and we were all busy: there were more demonstrations and more people got killed and I felt as if I were slowly going crazy. They taught us to fire our rifles, to set up ambushes, jump from an airplane, carry our gear, run, fall, run again. They forgot to teach us to talk, cry, forgive ourselves. Daniel looked at Tali, gave her another kiss, and said that he was stepping out for a second to take a leak.

I asked him if he wanted some company. Nah, he said, stay here and keep an eye on Tali for me. I stayed with Tali.

After a minute, we heard a shot.

Tal Belo added this statement to his signature on the Fighters' Letter, a declaration by Israeli combat officers and soldiers who are refusing to serve in the occupied territories. Translated from the Hebrew by Amichai Kronfeld.

WHERE IS THE PALESTINIAN GANDHI? THE SEARCH IS A GAME of endless fascination for the Western media, a geopolitical equivalent to "Where's Waldo?" On the surface, though, the question is honest. Gandhi was perhaps the first native to drive out a foreign occupier – in India's case, the British – using nonviolent resistance. His example continues to resonate and is worthy of imitation. Granted, it is unlikely to succeed universally; occupations traditionally end only when they become too painful, as with the British occupation of Palestine.

Israel would not exist today if not for the actions of Jewish militants like the Irgun, who in 1946 blew up the King David Hotel, headquarters of the British occupational government. The bombing killed 91 people, civilians and Jews among them, and was one of a series of militant actions designed to push the British out of Palestine and achieve Jewish self-determination. Irgun leader Menachem Begin, who would now be labeled a "terrorist," went on to become Israel's prime minister. His militant past formed the basis for his legitimacy, as is the case with Prime Minister Ariel Sharon today.

The search for a Palestinian Gandhi underscores our tacit agreement in the West: Israeli violence is always "retaliatory," its military invasions always a form of "self-defense." Conversely, Palestinian violence is always illegitimate, regardless of Israeli provocation. The Palestinian Gandhi – western-educated, appealing to the occupier's higher nature – would presumably reason with Israelis and convince them to pressure their leadership to end 36 years of brutal occupation. Or so the logic goes. What is missing from this argument is that many Palestinians have already practiced, and continue to practice, nonviolent resistance – the Palestinian-led International Solidarity Movement is but one example – to stunningly sparse media coverage. Palestinian militancy, on the other hand, is universally scorned and reported with vigor.

Home to the one of the world's most formidable armies, Israel imports the latest weapons technology from America – F-16 fighter-bombers and Hellfire missiles from Lockheed Martin, Apache attack helicopters from Boeing – all subsidized by billions of American taxpayer dollars. While the Palestinian suicide bomber is rightly condemned for killing and maiming civilians with his or her homemade nail bomb, Israel's supreme court upholds the use of the flechette shell, with which Israel kills and maims civilians in the Gaza Strip, one of the most densely populated places in the world. These shells, shot from tanks, are packed with thousands of tiny steel darts that spray in a "kill radius" some 300 meters long and 90 meters wide. Israeli flechette shell or Palestinian nail bomb: what is the difference again?

In the past three years, Israeli hit squads have assassinated some 140 Palestinian military and political leaders, killing more than 100 civilians in the process. Their air force ended a 30-year cease-fire with Syria, bombing an alleged militant training camp near Damascus following a particularly devastating suicide bomber attack. Given that Israel has not been able to end Palestinian attacks with its policy of force, a weak and increasingly isolated Syria likely presented a more satisfying target to please a grieving Israeli public – a public that broadly supports violence like the so-called "targeted killings," known as "liquidations" in Hebrew. But those on the front lines aren't so sure. Israel was understandably shocked when 27 Israeli air force pilots and reservists recently announced their refusal to "continue to harm innocent civilians" by assassinating the Palestinian leadership, stating that they would no longer conduct "immoral and illegal" bombing operations. The pilots were led by Brigadier General Yiftah Spector, widely regarded as a legendary flying ace. Their voices joined more than 500 Israeli "refuseniks" who have chosen possible jail time rather than serve in the occupied territories. The pilots were vilified in the Israeli press. "They should all clear out with their tails between their legs," said Ezer Weizman, former Israeli president and air force chief, on Israel Army Radio. "It is like a cancer: It will spread if not cut off."

The reasons many Jewish settlers move to the occupied territories, in clear violation of international law, are tax breaks and government subsidies. A study by the Israeli group Peace Now revealed that most are living in settlements for the "quality of life" they could not otherwise afford, and some 60 percent indicated willingness to leave if financially compensated. But their government (which commits $9 billion to annual defense spending) won't subsidize that. Instead, this September, Israel adopted a policy – in principle – to "remove" Yasser Arafat. Two Israeli cabinet ministers raised the stakes by issuing open threats to assassinate the democratically elected Palestinian leader. The *Jerusalem Post*, which counts among its directors neocon White House advisor Richard Perle, embraced this idea in an editorial entitled "Kill Arafat."

The Nazi holocaust has been interpreted in contemporary Israel as a humiliation requiring a completely new mindset. The six million murdered Jews came to be seen not only as victims of an atrocious period in history, but as meek "lambs to the slaughter," partly to blame for their own helplessness. The "New Jew," post-Holocaust, has to be able to fight to the death and never give an inch. This reinterpretation of Jewish tragedy has had a strange effect: the fear of annihilation so dominates the Israeli mindset – and is played like a harp by Israeli political leaders – that any foe is seen as a potential threat to Israel's existence, even if that enemy is a neighbor who wants his land back, or a critic from within exposing human rights violations. Israelis tend to see themselves as the weaker party, even when the balance of power is clearly in their favor.

Consider for a moment a parallel universe in which the Palestinian Authority announces plans to "remove" Ariel Sharon. Would the world not erupt in protest? Would the Palestinian cause not lose every shred of legitimacy?

Next, recall the Nazi occupation of France. The French who fought the Germans were later deemed heroes; collaborators were shot. Remember the Warsaw ghetto? The "freedom fighters" who lobbed Molotov cocktails at German tanks became heroes of resistance. I've seen the movies, read the books, visited the museums. Don't tell me that they were "terrorists" who should have waited for their Gandhi. But that doesn't stop the West from closing its eyes. And waiting.

Kitty Clark

"[W]hen faced with a crisis or choice or decision you and I will typically have recourse to many things – archives, consultations with experts, consultations with friends, consultations with psychiatrists, consultations with horoscopes – but one of the things we will not typically consult . . . is some philosophical position we happen to espouse." – Stanley Fish

TENS OF THOUSANDS HAVE BEEN targeted for deportation, and an equally large number is voluntarily leaving America. Yet, faced with ethnic profiling on a scale not seen since the Japanese-American internment, the postmodern academy remains quiet. You don't hear a whisper from Cornel West, Henry Louis Gates Jr., Homi K. Bhabha or Marjorie Garber. Is there something preventing the postmodernists from seeing the new American reality? Jameson, Butler, Spivak and the rest have had nothing to say about how we defend fragile liberties. Can there be a greater illustration of the academic left's intellectual bankruptcy?

The responses that came after the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington were weak – there has not been an analysis of these events that any ordinary person could grasp. Why don't we see a connection between philosophy and real life? Why don't academics stand up against the demonization of dissenters and political opposition in America? It is as if the abyss that Western politics fell into after September 11 did not exist. The postmodern philosophers are still fixated on the same old stuff.

And what is that "stuff"? Mostly, it is the legitimation of marginalized identities, typified by discussions of weirder and weirder aspects of sexuality. Having left the arena of public life, the postmodernists are content to pore over the fetishes of the private. Pick up any issue of a leading journal like *Social Text* or *Cultural Critique*, and in this era of Bush, Ashcroft and perpetual war, you will find articles dominated by Lacanian explorations of queer and "subversive" sexualities.

Stanley Fish declares in *Critical Inquiry* that philosophy after September 11 doesn't matter. Theory is not up to the task of offering livable truths: "considerations on the metaphysical level and considerations on the quotidian, mundane level are independent of one another," he writes. And if there is no connection between theory and practice, what is the point of theorizing? The answer is obvious: for its own sake. Those postmodernists under the illusion that what they say actually influences real-world events have been offended by Fish's explicit admission, but he has hit the nail on the head. Postmodern theory is mostly academic gibberish. Faced with practical problems – are genetically modified foods good or bad? – postmodern philosophy is speechless.

The problem lies in theoretical structure itself. Terry Eagleton, the dean of Marxist poststructuralism in England, has recanted, sort of, in his

book *After Theory*. But what comes after theory? Even more theory – of a more convoluted type. Eagleton claims to want to reorient theory toward practical problems, but there are constraints in the nature of theory itself that make this kind of self-criticism impossible. "If 'theory' means a reasonably systematic reflection on our guiding assumptions, it remains as indispensable as ever," Eagleton concludes. It is difficult to see how a jerry-rigged theoretical structure can come to terms with solid new grand narratives like global capitalism and terror. A fresh critique will have to come from another source.

That source will not be the postmodern superstar, Jacques Derrida. Much has been made of Derrida's apparent coming to terms with political reality, for example in Giovanna Borradori's *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. But when Borradori asks Derrida about tolerance, cosmopolitanism and human rights, Derrida coyly deconstructs the origins of these values, pretending at the same time to appreciate their application. We must question the "ontotheological, philosophical and religious discourses in which the cosmopolitical ideal was formulated," says Derrida with typical murkiness. We must defend human rights, he adds, but then performs this cynical dance of words: "[H]uman rights are never sufficient . . . they are not natural. They have a history – one that is recent, complex and unfinished." Don't hold your breath for an unequivocal defense of the human rights of the prisoners still being held without trial by American forces at Guantánamo Bay.

The examples of denial go on and on. In *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Slavoj Zizek refuses to accept that 9/11 or anything after it is real in any ordinary sense of the term. Instead, he argues that the attack was a projection of our deepest fantasies, a literalization of *Independence Day* and other apocalyptic movies. Fine, but what are we supposed to do? Nothing. Life is a movie. Munch popcorn and sip soda while the images flicker on. Jean Baudrillard, in his essay "The Spirit of Terrorism," says that "the collapse of the World Trade Center towers is unimaginable, but that is not enough to make it a real event." Evil is the "obscure object of desire," and so we are avowably complicit, something the terrorists must know in their "symbolic strategy." The terrorists were trained in Lacanian philosophy?

The postmodern academy shuns grand narratives. But how do we defend against the loss of fundamental liberties – threatened by each side in the war on terror – in the absence of those narratives? The splintered discourse of postmodernism prevents us from focusing on basic values, despite the fact that many people can now plainly see that basic values are under historic assault. If there is a malaise afflicting Western civilization, it comes from the academics who have made it their goal to bring down the very edifice that sustains them. The collapse of the Berlin Wall marked the end of communist ideology, and 9/11 meant the death of postmodernism in the academy. The academy just doesn't know it yet.

Anis Shivani is at work on a novel exploring the culture wars in the postmodern academy.

should have

I should have joined in more often, but...

could have

I could have taken the promotion, except...

would have

I would have found someone special, only...

can't.

I just can't.

Can't. That's what social anxiety disorder tells more than 10 million Americans*[1] about work, friends and relationships every day of their lives. NOW you can make a difference with one word...

I awoke early one morning to a new doormat, mysteriously placed on the front porch. Good quality, thick weave, designed with a funky red circle and sharp, lower-case letters reading "happy inside." Attached was a small postcard from Target. Apparently, I could visit their store for many more wonderful items for my home. Everyone in the neighborhood woke up to the same doormat. Corporate America has announced that we are happy inside. It's official.

Joel Blair, Chicago

Paxil ad, *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, August 1999

*Based on U.S. Census: 200,444,000 adults ≥18 years of age as of 8/1/98.

SCIENTIFIC/INDUSTRIAL/FIANCIAL THINKING DESTROYS EMOTIONAL CIRCUITS.

Prozac made me numb. I took it for seven months to relieve my severe depression and thoughts of suicide. Instead, my upper eyelid swelled half-shut, I gained 15 pounds, and I twice experienced facial rashes so severe that they had to be treated with prescription drugs. I could no longer feel sadness, joy or even anger, and I stopped dreaming at night. I would fall asleep instantly and terrifyingly. I lost all feelings of sexual desire, and almost left my boyfriend. I was lost in a fog of apathy and could not think clearly or motivate myself to make decisions. When I told my therapist that I could no longer feel strong emotions, she prescribed Wellbutrin and a stronger dose of Prozac to cure my "flat effect." Instead, I took myself off Prozac cold turkey. Four months later, my personality has come back, along with my life. I can cry now, and I dream at night again. I read that the so-called "surgical" precision of Prozac acting on neurotransmitters is false, and that it instead acts on a wide area to simply suppress the emotional response of the limbic system, as well as the frontal lobe (which controls higher-level thinking and future planning). Prozac blunted my mind and forcibly removed my sadness. It kept me from thinking clearly or feeling strongly enough to find out why I became depressed and to heal the real problem.

A GIRL
California

IN A FAST SOCIETY ALL SLOW/PAINFUL EMOTIONS ARE LABELLED AS DISEASE.

'A FAST SOCIETY': BY SUSHIL YADAV

I recently began looking at anxiety attacks not as mental disease but as a natural alert system telling me what I already know, unconsciously: that certain environments are bad for me. I have panic attacks in crowded, fluorescent-lit department stores, faced with a million choices of carefully advertised products. And why shouldn't I panic? It's an aggressive atmosphere. Succumbing to capitalism's demand that I be an integer living my life according to its dictates is enough to make me feel small and incapable to choose. I have panic attacks in unfamiliar cities with rude people; I have panic attacks with uncommunicative, unsupportive people. To turn to a drug is hardly as effective as sitting down, meditating on what I need, and then acting to get it. I do not have panic attacks in the company of affectionate, thoughtful people, at a job where I feel appreciated or in natural environments. I did, on the other hand, have a panic attack on the tourist strip-mall pier of Santa Barbara.

KARIN BADT
Paris, France

A quote from *Exploring the Crack in the Cosmic Egg*, written by Joseph Chilton Pearce: "The thrust of any culture, archaic or contemporary, is to predict and control the flow of nature. Prediction and control in this sense are intellectualized and forms of our survival drives, and misuse of our capacity for transformation. Prediction and control could be potent, logical tools. In their acculturated form they set us against, and split us from, the flow of life, and defeat us in our very attempts to understand our nature and respond intelligently." I completely agree. We believe that the technology of drugs is the answer while we completely ignore the reality of how our nature is being offended by the onslaught of a culture so completely disconnected from its true source and natural intelligence.

LARUE
Boulder, Colorado

<PROZACSPOTLIGHT.ORG>

A FAST (LARGE) SOCIETY WILL ALWAYS BE CRUEL TO ANIMAL/TREES/AIR/WATER/LAND AND TO ITSELF.

RANSPORT
HE MINUTE
TO THE PARK STATION
London
LUNCH OR DINE AT
BRUNNER
HIGHEST
WILLEM VAN GENK, TUBE STATION (DETAIL)

"NOTHING IS MORE COMMON THAN THE IDEA THAT WE, the people living in the Western world of the 20th century, are eminently sane," wrote Erich Fromm in 1955. "Can we be so sure that we are not deceiving ourselves?" In the 21st century we should be even more wary. On 9/11 we witnessed hundreds of bodies incinerated before our eyes – packed into the earth by a million tons of falling rubble. We've seen infrared air strikes, terrorists in black hoods stowed like cargo en route to Guantánamo, the mangled corpses of Saddam's sons laid out like coldcuts. We've been urged to "ask your doctor about Celebrex," without being told what Celebrex does. We're strafed with commercial messages and coaxed into fear by color-coded threat levels that pre-diagnose our angst.

In times like these, artists often serve as mirrors of our culture, offering signposts in the search for meaning. But today's high-profile artists don't seem up to the task. Instead of Picasso's wrenching *Guernica*, we get Damien Hirst's intricate gags: barnyard animals in formaldehyde! Instead of the complacency-bursting chaos of Pollock's drip paintings, we're given the majestic yet onanistic films of Matthew Barney – never allowed to stand alone, of course, but packaged with flashy backstory about his modeling career (J.Crew), football glories (Yale) and rockstar bedmate (Björk). There is powerful art to be found today, art that springs from the craziness around us yet somehow manages not to identify itself with the dominant values of the culture. And, by and large, it's found outside institutional contemporary art – far outside, where the people who make it are, like the culture itself, a little on-edge, a little off-kilter.

MATTHEW BARNEY

These "outsider" artists may be fiercely independent eccentrics, naïfs or visionaries, mental patients or recluses, but their common link is that they're all unsullied by the stylistic conventions of the institutional artistic community. They are driven by a singular impulse to create; unlike their contemporary art counterparts, their motivations have little to do with securing gallery representation, pulling in grants, selling work or paying off student loans on the obligatory MFA degree. What they lack in training, outsiders make up in raw conviction and an unwillingness to stifle their inner voice. The results are often stunning. Jimi Hendrix, putting it in a musical context, said, "A musician, if he's a messenger, is like a child who hasn't been handled too many times by man, hasn't had too many fingerprints across his brain. That's why music is so much heavier than anything you've ever felt."

While the content of these urgent messages is often deeply compelling, perhaps more profound are the lessons these outsider artists offer in a postmodern, globalized age. With entities like Clear Channel working to create a monoculture of the airwaves, Big Macs being served up piping hot and perfectly identical from Boston to Beijing, and mom-and-pop stores being bulldozed to put up Wal-Marts, truly independent artists offer a model that doesn't jive with the system: real cultural and creative autonomy. That's why outsider art is so hard to pin down. There are no movements, no schools of thought, no biennial circuits where outsider artists can share the latest thinking. While they live in a corporate world, their work remains independent from the influence of money. Contemporary art institutions, on the other hand, can thank some of the world's largest corporations for funding – Absolut, Altria Group (formerly Philip Morris), the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation (the American Tobacco Company fortune) and Getty Oil, to name a few. In the UK, the most prominent private collection is owned by none other than global advertising mogul Charles Saatchi.

If you're unwilling to let corporations tell you how to think in other aspects of your life, why cede artistic authority to professionals in this curatorial-corporate complex?

A more interesting question, however, is why outsider art speaks so clearly to this time in history. Why is this art coming of age now? Having seen such horror and lost so much, perhaps we're witnessing a subtle shift toward a post-ironic age, where earnestness and personal honesty are ascendant and self-congratulatory cleverness is waning. Or maybe we long for creations that from the outset defy the machinations of commodity culture. In a world where advertisers conflate no-excuses thinking and boundaryless living with a new SUV or a pack of cigarettes, those who really do think outside the box offer us an authentic way out. Or perhaps it's simply that in an era when "normal" means a chronic case of cultural cognitive dissonance, we need voices that speak from a vantage point that's less than sane.

Jean Dubuffet, an early champion of self-taught art and the French painter-sculptor who coined the term *art brut*, once chastised the egotism of the mainstream mind: "Western man believes the things he thinks exist outside in exactly the same way he thinks of them. He is convinced that the shape of the world is the same shape as his reason." Perhaps he got it backwards. If our minds are coming to resemble the world – its anxiety, disjointedness and instability – then these artists, attuned to the madness, are now our perfect guides.

Paul Schmelzer

POK

ASHLEY WOOD, POPBOT

FROM WOODCUTS AND THE BOOK OF Kells to the modern logo and the image that sells, the cartoon has survived. It is the graffiti of our minds, so much unlike the mosaic of movies and TV, more true to the eye than the straight-laced lines of frozen speech. The cartoon captures something of the process, something of the way we see.

The jump from the canvas of still sketches to the roll of the celluloid reel has left the cartoon's lure unstunted – it is still our betokened clown, the buffoon of our mediums. Even if its still birth has been abandoned to the one-panel punch of newspaper corners, the three-square dash to the punchline, even now, with its limits, it highlights the form of our minds, if not also the span of our attention.

And for the addicts and fanatics lurk the armies of superheroes and villains, ready for purchase at the corner strip mall, the god-like pantheon that conspires to break us free of normality. A new religion of color and its holy doctrine of paranoia, its rituals of gadgetry and mutation, its violent fantasies and spaceship dreams, drawing in the lost adolescents left behind in the wake of electronic evolution. However locked to the dogma of generic sci-fi, to whatever degree aggression is colored in, splashed on-screen, taken up by first-person shooters, the comic book portrays our instinct for action, the itching wound of civilization not yet scarred or healed over and all the while inking out its proof of an art form.

Its effects underwrite television episodes and chapter breaks of novels, keep a chokehold on the structure of our sitcoms and megamovies: the fast action and constipated dialogue, the disdain for explanation, the flash, the bang bam pop pow. The forefronted action, the close-ups and crane shots. Even Dilbert can poke fun at the dregs of work while running alongside the stock quotes.

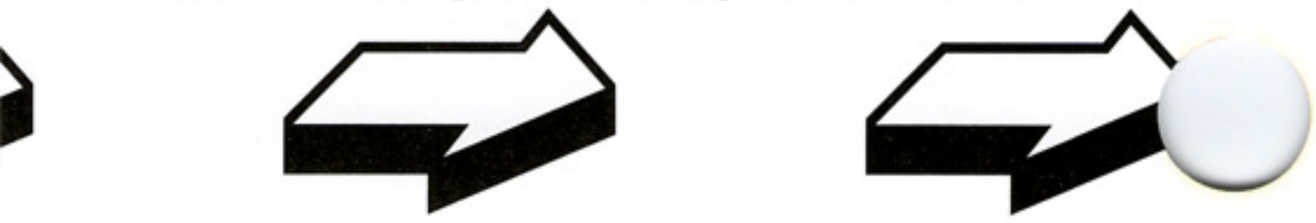
And if the modern world takes them down we will still hear the cry of the underground pen. The bleak, acned face of daily existence, the pains of unpopularity and puberty, the ugly and the angst-ridden beating up on themselves. Diehard individualists, independents who flow in ink-licked simplicity with strange-shaped heads boxed by the demands of our dreams. Girl heroes and angry cerebrotronic wannabees, the crosshatching of hate eight-balled into the corner of a lonely ghost world. They are pastoral and primal, modern wanderings of unpopular pop pulp that leave us now and then with a little crumb to relish. Pure visual energy, drowning in voids of memory, a sadly silent understatement.

Mark Wynn

Chase Bank's Universal Entertainment Hulk Mastercard, 2003

IF YOU TURN ON YOUR TELEVISION SET AND LOOK AWAY AT a nearby wall, you will discover that the reflections produced by the light from the TV vary constantly in contrast and intensity. It occurs to me that every cell in our bodies has been programmed to respond to light – when a shadow passes over a field mouse, it becomes alert to a potential threat. Abrupt changes in the intensity of light are indications of danger that our neurological system has evolved to respond to. What effects can a lifetime of exposure to this assault produce? It's obvious that the intensity of visual and audio contrast in our lives has increased through the years. I assume that our brains' response is a protective deadening of our neural receptors.

I am convinced that the passivity of the American public is related to this phenomenon. It is hard to believe, but a poll taken this summer indicated that two thirds of the American public could not name even one of the Democrats then running for president; meanwhile, three times as many Americans believe in Satan than in evolution. We have lost our sense of what is real and replaced it with an addiction to the virtual reality created by television, entertainment and advertising. The constant juxtaposition of images like that of a woman



crying over a child lost in a fire and a commercial for Pampers amplifies this sense of meaninglessness and stupor.

One can make the case that we have lost the capacity for abstract thought. When we read, or listen to the radio, the mind forms images in response. The same can be said to occur when an illustration provokes the viewer to consider its symbolic relationship to reality. Abstraction encourages the mind to bridge the distance from suggestion to reality. There are certain tribes in Africa that do not distinguish between dream life and daily life. We find ourselves in a similar condition, but our virtual reality fails to serve our deepest needs.

In our world, reality has been replaced by forms of entertainment that require little mental activity and encourage inertia and apathy. How else can we explain the incredible indifference to their own lives and interests that characterizes the American people at this time? The misrepresentations of government, the outrageous dishonesty of business, the attacks on our civil rights, the collapse of our educational system and the failures of our social safety nets have produced almost no response or indignation from the American public. When Bush orders an aircraft carrier moved at a cost of $1 million so he can land on the deck without San Diego being visible in the background, he is aware that this manipulative misrepresentation will not affect his popularity, even after it is disclosed. I am certain, as it becomes increasingly obvious that we were deliberately lied to in order to justify a war with Iraq, there will be no general sense of betrayal. We no longer understand the relationship between cause and effect.

Our culture's dominant way of expressing "reality" is through photographic means. "Photographs are perhaps the most mysterious of all the objects that make up and thicken the environment we recognize as modern," Susan Sontag has brilliantly observed. "Photographs are really experience captured, and the camera is the ideal arm of consciousness in its acquisitive mood." Above all, photography seems to validate and protect the existing social conditions. Because of its believability, photography is unexcelled as a tool to generate desire, which in part explains the diminished role of illustration in advertising. In a culture that values commerce above all other things, the imaginative potential of illustration has become irrelevant. For those who control the narrative of American life, illustration is now too idiosyncratic, too hard to control and less reassuring than the photographic imagery we have all grown up with. This is not to say that illustrators exist outside the world of commerce. On the contrary, we are all embedded in that world. But the need to express some aspect of our personal vision is what makes illustrators suspect at a time when the bottom line is the bottom line.

A Greek myth tells us that the first drawing came about as a woman traced her lover's shadow in the sand as he was about to leave for war, where he might be killed and never seen again. The myth, of course, is not literally true. Tracing shadows, on the other hand, is an elegant way of describing the act of illustration. If illustration suggests illumination, then the shadow is central to its meaning. All of us who create imagery know that the relationship of dark to light is unavoidable. Although Freud, like all true artists, offered us only one way to view the world, I've always been attracted to his notion of the struggle between Eros and Thanatos, the pull towards life versus the pull towards death that seems to occupy the human psyche. Eros is the mother of sex, love, feeling and the desire to make things. Thanatos embraces darkness, obscurity, evil and entropy. Although the dialogue between these two forces predates history, the anxiety of this moment in time convinces us that the balance has gone awry.

When I was eight, I contracted rheumatic fever and was confined to bed for almost a year. I entertained myself during that time by creating armies, cities, animals and machines out of clay on a three-foot wooden board with a deep groove ending in a knothole at one end. It was a landscape of unlimited possibilities. At the end of every day I would destroy everything I had made and dreamed through the night of starting again the next morning. My mother would bring the board each day with a glass of orange juice and a soft-boiled egg. After breakfast, I would begin my work; I realized then, and even more today, that making things had rescued my life. The deepest role of art is creating an alternative reality, something the world needs desperately at this time.

I used to feel that it was strange that artists are self-anointed. Now I realize it could not be any other way, because, above all, art is a view of life itself: it cannot be given by others nor taken away by dealers or marketing men. The real artists are always working for nothing because they don't see their essential role in society as being simply the exchange of goods. The real artists turn up first in the anti-war demonstrations, not because they lack patriotism, but because they revere life.

Milton Glaser is a founder of Pushpin Studio and is currently the head of the multi-disciplinary design firm, Milton Glaser, Inc. His latest book on design, Art is Work, *was published in 2000.*

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My opposition to our culture of rampant acquisitiveness runs deep, and I've enjoyed *Adbusters*' provocative attacks on it. That this same critique seems arbitrarily tasked to a one-sided representation of the Mideast conflict – on the specious grounds, I gather, that destructive American foreign policy is being dictated by occult Jewish financial and political interests – is sadly illustrative of the current disarray of Western liberalism. My politics include organic farming and strict corporate regulation, but do not automatically extend to behaviorist apologia for Palestinian terrorism, just as my qualified support for Israeli sovereignty does not extend to American crusades waged (allegedly) in its service. Who speaks for me? Or is my narrow demographic simply worth alienating in favor of the larger market?

RICHARD PREISS
San Francisco, California

Kirkpatrick Sale argues that the foundation of the state of Israel is a historic error brought on by colonialism and violence, and one that must be undone [*Adbusters* #49]. His argument is not only ridiculous and historically flawed, it is also immoral.

The Jews did not come to Palestine under any colonial request, but rather fled an anti-Semitic Europe that proved to be their burial ground 50 years later – a proof that Zionism was, and is, a movement of self-survival. This elementary right of self-definition, a right that the entire world shouts that the Palestinians must have, cannot be taken from the Jewish people, because it was never given. The Balfour Declaration and the UN resolution affirming the creation of Israel are merely international acknowledgments of the obvious. Sale's interest in the well-being of the Jewish people ("the diaspora . . . might even be thought of as the natural or historic role of Jewry") is a thin mask over his fear of the terror now attacking his American home.

NEAMA LAVIEL
Tel Aviv, Israel

Please understand that when you print Kirkpatrick Sale's frivolous scenarios for dismantling Israel, you are doing a disservice to yourselves as constructive activists. I believe, perhaps as Sale does, that in a better and future world all states will be obsolete, all national flags will be burned and all humanity will inhabit the planet in good will and love. However, until *Adbusters* can write enthusiastically about dismantling the USA as well as Israel, then perhaps the space could be put to better use.

FRANK BERNSTEIN
Israel

I get frustrated when anti-Semitism is cited as a defense to arguments against Israel's apartheid regime or American neo-conservatives' ideological, political and financial support for it. This argument, made in so many letters to *Adbusters*, reminds me of high school, when teachers were powerless to reprimand minorities because they screamed "racism." I've seen so many Hollywood dramas about the Holocaust, but they lose their efficacy when I read the news the next day. If anyone should have sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians, it should be the historically persecuted Jews.

SEAN ORR
Vancouver, British Columbia

I don't want to sound like a whiney Jew, screaming "anti-Semite" at the first sign of free speech, but the rhetoric of Tom Fairman of Melbourne, Australia (discuss the Aborigines before you point fingers) and Julian Skinner [Letters, *Adbusters* #46] comes across like an ignorant repetition of the Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion. Are modern, artsy tree-huggers also Aryan brothers? I, too, think that the state of affairs in Israel is disgusting, but if Jews didn't have a state or an army, we'd probably be extinct – which is exactly what the Arab states have openly admitted is their aim (who's the real Hitler here?).

Note to Julian: what difference does

it make how many Israeli Jews under 30 have read a single line of the Zohar? Did you even know that in the Jewish religion, one *isn't allowed* to read the Zohar until age 40?

JONATHON KASSEL
Johannesburg, South Africa

A new religion is sweeping the globe, surpassing even the ancient faith of Christianity. It is surprising how quickly it has emerged, having been founded only 50 years ago. People of all ages worship, usually at home, though some even pray in bars or restaurants. At the peak of daily worship, they go into a trance, staring without expression at the black box that is their holy idol. They call this Prime Time.

STEFAN J. REINDL
Kelowna, British Columbia

I used to judge the homeless, not knowing that circumstances sometimes put us in situations that are hard to escape. I'm living in a Gospel Mission, waiting for the orchard apples to ripen so I can make some cash to get out of this rut that I'm in. My life in the last two years has been a constant struggle to get ahead with an injured leg from a gunshot wound – I was foolish enough to try to stop a robbery in a Halifax bar. "I wouldn't have done that!" you say. Which makes you what? A typical, self-centred North American. People all over the world are dying of starvation, while you are out shopping for a bigger SUV, nicer shoes, brand names, a better image, insincerity. Think twice before you judge. It could happen to you.

STEPHAN BOIVAN
Kelowna, British Columbia

For many of us in Europe, the article by Niall Ferguson, "Why America Outpaces Europe" [*Adbusters* #49], will make for amusing reading. "Western Europeans are astonishingly idle," he says; we take longer holidays and work shorter hours than people in the USA. Of course, Ferguson makes no comment on the well-being of US workers. The American Institute of Stress (AIS) estimates that one million workers in the US are absent from work every day due to stress, at a cost of $300 billion a year in terms of reduced productivity, staff turnover and insurance costs. An International Labor Organization study showed that Americans worked the equivalent of an extra 40-hour week in 2000 compared to 10 years before – the average American works nearly a month longer than the Japanese and three months more than Germans every year. There is a saying that "hard work never killed anybody." It just makes them very sick instead.

ANDREW PAYNE
Bedford, England

Ireland was poor for hundreds of years, but now that we have the keys to the sweet shop, we are stuffing ourselves. An atmosphere of materialism and conformity is sowing the seeds of apathy toward the rest of the world. We are insulated in comfort – a banana republic, but with DVDs and SUVs. When the multinationals move on, who will care about us? The English? Our new lords and masters pay better, but the slavery is the same.

JOSIT O'CONNOR
Ireland

It seems the end is nigh for another British bastion: the traditional school tuckshop. My mouth dropped open as I read that one of the top schools in Britain, Charterhouse, had sold out to Starbucks and swapped its custard creams and mint bonbons for plastic smiles and frothy, flavored milk. Now children as young as seven will be able to strut like *Sex in the City* gals and chat over their "skinny lattes" – another part of the American "dream," come to commercialize our lives.

SOPHIE YOUNG
London, United Kingdom

Some cruel culture jammer unplugged all the soda machines at North Eugene High School on the day before the first day of classes. It's surprising how many days in a row they stayed unplugged. It's remarkable how little they were missed.

ANONYMOUS

Several years ago I met and talked with the Australian delegation to a nuclear non-proliferation conference. In flowery diplomatic language, they explained that it was pointless for Australia to join the coalition of progressive countries pushing for the total abolition of nuclear weapons. The USA has too big an influence on the vote, they said, and if the USA doesn't want it, it could never happen.

And then they started talking about "rogue nuclear states."

ZANE YOUNG
Adelaide, South Australia

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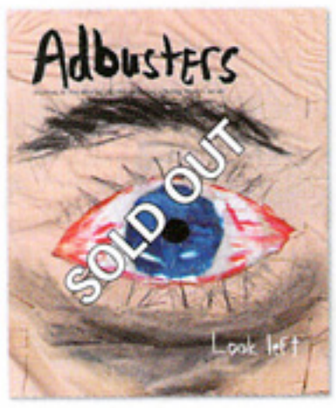
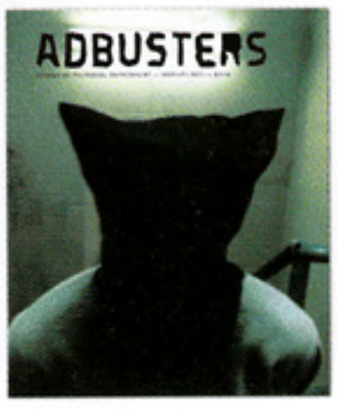
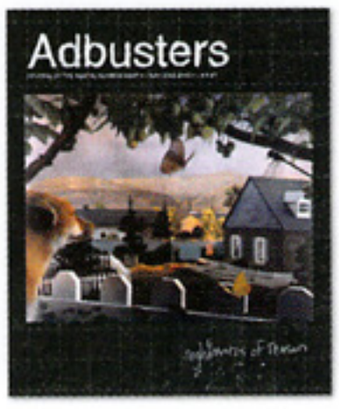


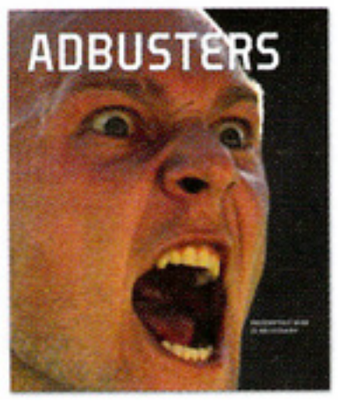
45 I Want to Change My Look



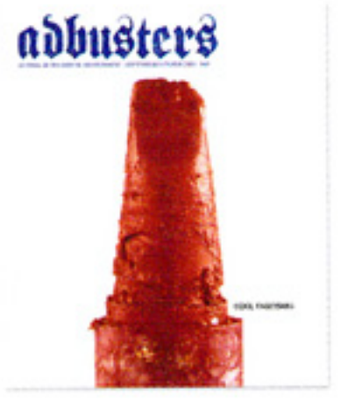
46 Are You in Denial?



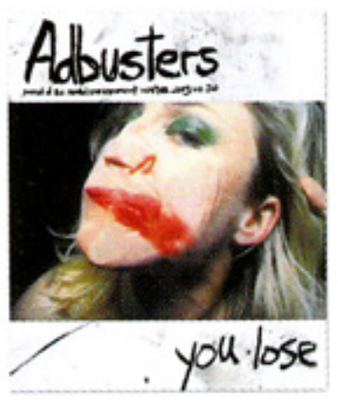
47 Nightmares of Reason



48 Us vs Them



49 Cool Fascismo



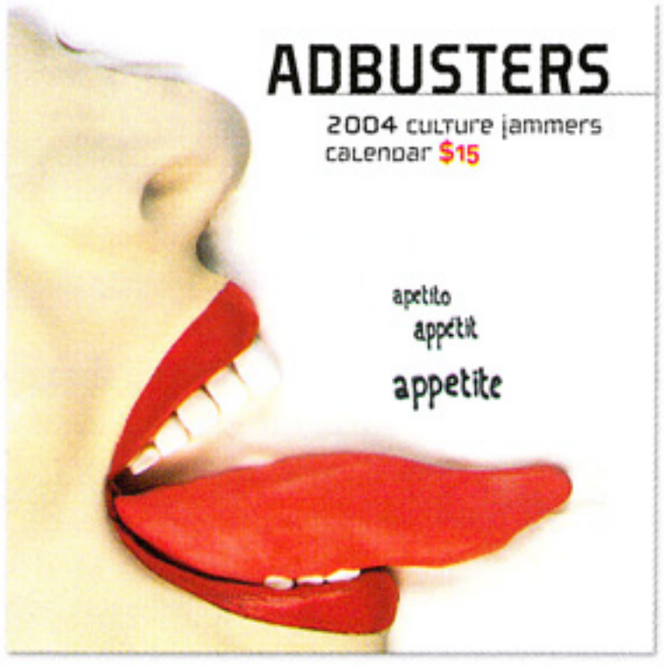
50 Winners/Losers

I've always felt a slight superiority to America – I mean, we would never let things get *that* bad here in our sleepy little country. Then, a few weeks ago, I started to notice some stickers plastered around. "This is where I nailed my first 360 to backside heelflip" it said on the back of a sign. On a park bench: "This is where I made a move on my best mate's girlfriend." I liked this new form of street art, and in my head I congratulated whomever was responsible.

How naive I was. This was not some community-based street artist enriching our lives and making us think. It was an ad campaign for the latest hand-held video-game console. Less than a week later, a friend's brother told me he had just found the greatest job. A well-known jeans company was paying him 10 bucks a pop to illegally spraypaint logos on the streets. The main area they asked him to target: the local high school.

But surely we wouldn't let it get *that* bad down here.

A.J. DINSDALE
Victoria, Australia



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G. Richard Wagoner – Chairman and CEO, General Motors Corporation

Dear Chairman and CEO Wagoner,

I wanted to let you, your board of directors and your marketing team know exactly how much I appreciate your untiring "Like a Rock" advertising campaign. You clearly understand that the American public has an insatiable appetite for the complex mixture of beauty and power that this campaign delivers. I must say, however, that a recent TrailBlazer ad (or was it a Tahoe?) truly reached the pinnacle of the "Like-a-Rock" genre.

Who could resist the storyline? A mysterious 30-something woman escapes her prosperous yet somehow unfulfilled life on a quasi-spiritual quest for "it," the fabled heights of personal freedom. Oh, everybody knows the importance of driving to, and over, mountains in our self-actualizing American pilgrimage. The really clever feature, though, is the brilliant juxtaposition of the narrator's smooth-as-caramel voice (I bet it's James Garner, isn't it?) crooning this saga against the stunningly modern image of a woman ascending alpine *terra incognita*. He's so benign, so grandfatherly, that our Heidi-like heroine isn't the least bit diminished.

Could it get more 21st-century American than a well-heeled woman four-wheeling to her personal heaven? I won't presume to fathom the depths of this astonishingly clever advertising campaign, or to tell its planners their business. After all, it is they who have so craftily set the Chevy brand apart in the dog-eat-dog (or is it Rock-eat-Ram?) world of American marketing, and you, the GM Board and your millions of stockholders must swell with pride every time you see these amazing ads. What a contribution to American culture.

CHRIS LANDRY
Silverton, Colorado

The state (of Florida) kills a guy who kills people because they kill unborn children. I wonder who kills the state?

LAWRENCE LITTLEBEE
Vancouver, British Columbia

I grew up white, rich and sheltered, and went on to become a professional cameraman. Features, industrials, commercials – they all dripped with unabashed greed. I watched in amazement as the ad execs had ferocious arguments over whether the ice cream should be licked like this or like that, whether the actress was sexy enough, etc. The next 20 years I spent filming television documentaries at less than half the pay – the best career decision I ever made. I love Joseph Campbell's call to "follow your bliss" . . . if we all did what we love, can you imagine the inner wealth we would have?

JEFF TRIP WAYMAN
Maui, Hawaii.

I recently went to a local thrift store and purchased a $1.99 shirt with "GAP" on the front. Donning my new disguise, I entered a nearby Gap store and proceeded to plant 50 business-card-size notes in the pockets of clothing and backpacks, each containing facts about Gap's sweatshop labour. I consider it $1.99 well spent.

JAY WILMAN
Oshawa, Ontario

I was eating a big bag of grapes from a local farmer when it dawned on me: I had never eaten grapes this large and this sweet in my entire life. They were enormous and perfect. Were they real grapes, or genetically modified? How will I ever be sure? Have I already forgotten what real grapes taste like?

ALLISON TINSLEY
Clawson, Michigan

Are you home? Are you available? I'm not. I'm sitting, wired to a computer, craving a cigarette and a stretch of the leg. In front of me sits a script so I can counteract everything from an "I'm not interested" to "I'm sorry, that person died 13 years ago." Am I getting through? I'm trying to tell you that I call the homes of the elderly, of mothers, of

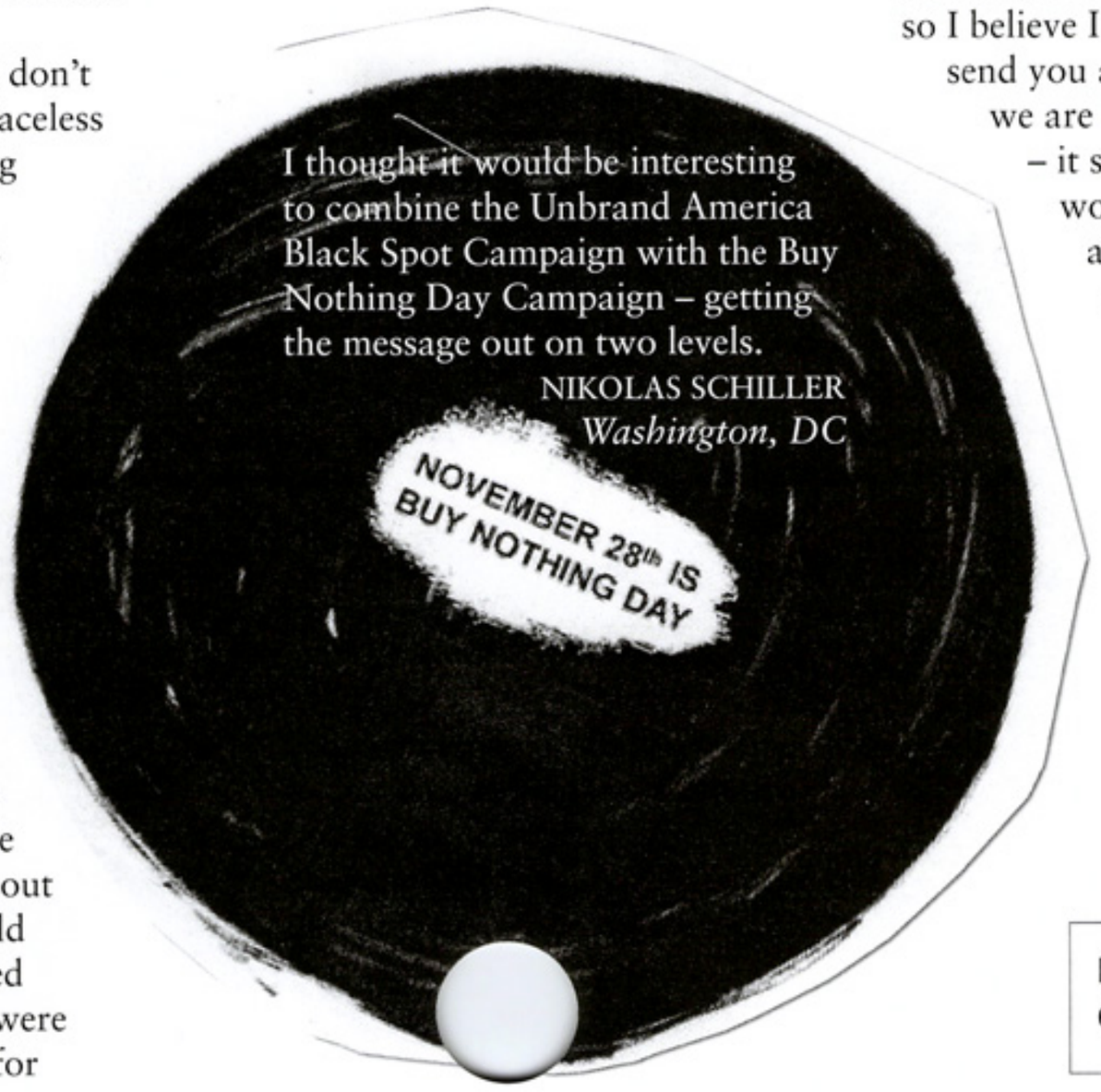
people moving into their first apartment. I'm peddling books, DVDs and appointments for chiropractors I don't even know. I'm hustling for the faceless frame of consumerism and feeling used, degraded and low on soul. I'm a telemarketer, and I want to say I'm sorry. I can't take the pressure, but the need to meet the cost of living requires my slavery.

D. REED
Chicago, Illinois

The mailroom at the prison in which I reside has withheld *Adbusters* #47, as it apparently includes a picture of nudes in an art gallery (horrors!). The mailroom's stance is based on a case from 1998, about whether *Playboy* magazine should be included in the list of approved reading for prisoners. The rules were changed last year, and do allow for *National Geographic*, art materials, etc., so I believe I can fight and win. I would send you a copy of these rules, but we are currently under lockdown – it seems a guard or sheriff, working transport, dropped a loaded magazine of .380-caliber ammunition into a laundry cart. The fun never stops, I tell you.

I shall keep you posted on the progress of the appeal. All the people I share *Adbusters* with have been antsy for a new issue. Your mag is a breath of fresh air.

DAVID KURTZMAN
Solano Prison, Vacaville, California



I thought it would be interesting to combine the Unbrand America Black Spot Campaign with the Buy Nothing Day Campaign – getting the message out on two levels.

NIKOLAS SCHILLER
Washington, DC

Letters
editor@adbusters.org

CULTURAL REVOLUTION IS OUR BUSINESS

We are a loose global network of artists, writers, environmentalists, ecological economists, media-literacy teachers, reborn Lefties, ecofeminists, downshifters, high school shit-disturbers, campus rabble-rousers, incorrigibles, malcontents and green entrepreneurs. We are idealists, anarchists, guerrilla tacticians, pranksters, neo-Luddites, poets, philosophers and punks. Our aim is to topple existing power structures and forge a major rethinking of the way we will live in the 21st century. We want to change the way information flows, the way institutions wield power, the way the world keeps the peace, the way the food, fashion, automobile, sports, music and culture industries set their agendas. Above all, we want to change the way we interact with the mass media and the way in which meaning is produced in our society.

LA REVOLUCIÓN CULTURAL ES NUESTRO NEGOCIO

Somos una libre y relajada red global de artistas, escritores, ambientalistas, economistas ecológicos, estudiosos de la comunicación, izquierdistas renacidos, eco-feministas, minimalistas, desmadrosos de preparatoria, creadores de polémica universitaria, incorregibles, inconformistas y emprendedores verdes. Somos idealistas, anarquistas, tácticos de guerrilla, bromistas, neo-ludistas, poetas, filósofos y punks. Nuestro objetivo es derribar las estructuras de poder existentes y fraguar una profunda reflexión sobre la manera en que viviremos en el Siglo XXI. Queremos cambiar el flujo de la información, el modo en que las instituciones ejercen su poder, la forma en que el mundo mantiene la paz, la manera en que las industrias de la comida, la moda, los automóviles, los deportes, la música y la cultura fijan sus planes. Sobre todo, queremos cambiar la forma en que interactuamos con los medios masivos de comunicación y la manera en que el contenido y el significado son producidos en nuestra sociedad.

NOTRE AFFAIRE, C'EST LA RÉVOLUTION CULTURELLE

Nous sommes un réseau libre d'artistes, d'écrivains, d'écologistes, d'écolo-économistes, d'enseignants de la culture médiatique, de gens de la nouvelle gauche, d'écoféministes, de partisans d'une vie moins matérialiste, de semeurs de caca du secondaire, d'agitateurs universitaires, d'incorrigibles, d'insatisfaits et d'entrepreneurs verts. Nous sommes des idéalistes, des anarchistes, des stratèges de guérilla, des farceurs, des nouveaux Luddites, des poètes, des philosophes et des punks. Nous visons à faire basculer les structures de pouvoir existantes et à reforger dans son entier un penser et un vivre du 21ème siècle. Nous voulons changer le trajet de l'information, l'exercice du pouvoir dans les institutions, la façon de faire régner la paix dans le monde, la manière dont les industries programment l'alimentation, la mode, l'automobile, les sports, la musique et la culture. Et pardessus tout, nous voulons changer notre relation avec les médias ainsi que la façon dont la signification se crée dans notre société.

FIND OUT MORE
Visit the Culture Jammers Campaign Headquarters.
www.adbusters.org

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- To help us launch and sustain our social marketing campaigns.
- To help us pay for our legal battles.
- To help us uncool Brand America.

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In the US write a check payable to Tides Foundation/Media Foundation and send it to our Vancouver address.
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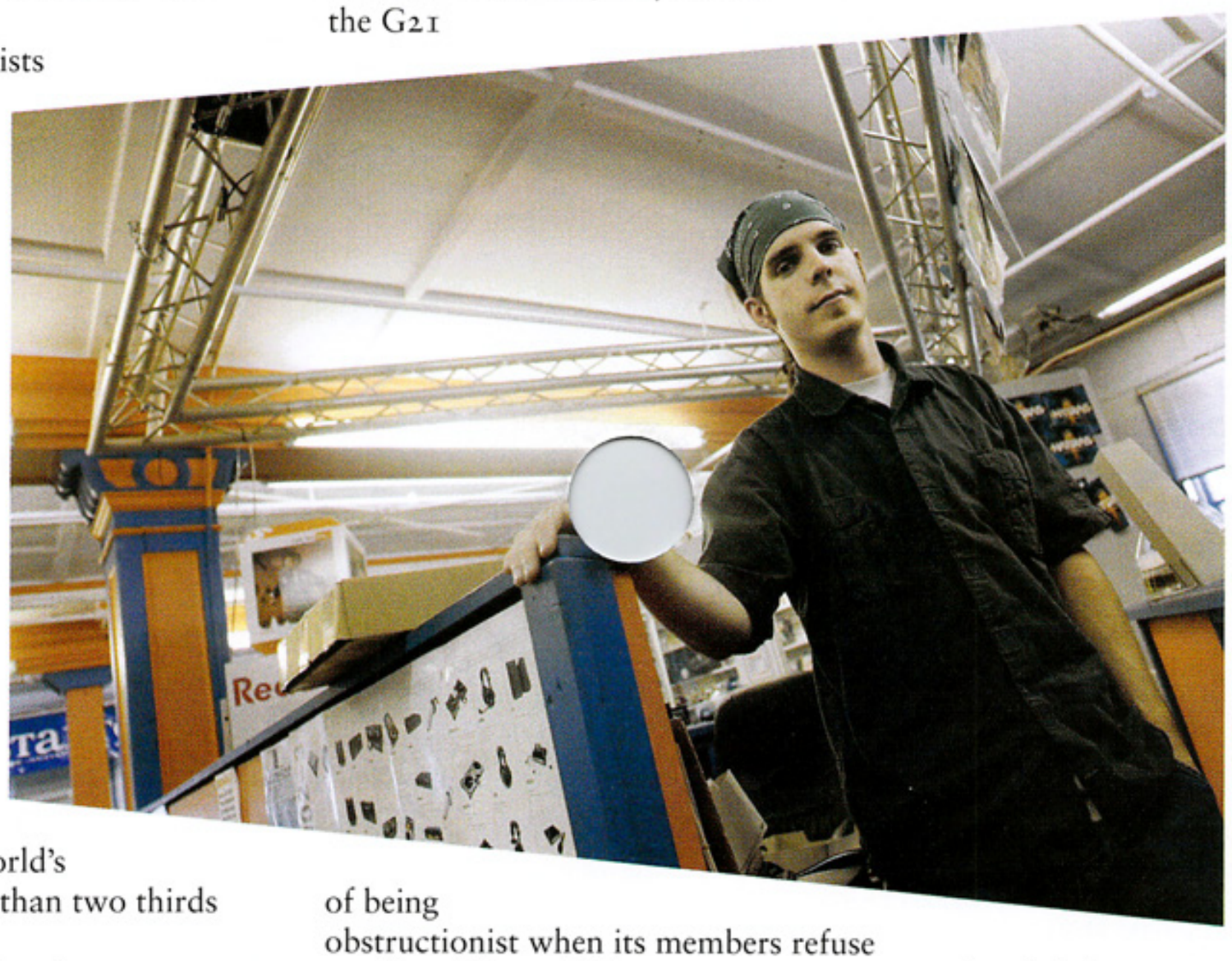
For more information, contact Lara Honrado: 604.736.9401 or lara@adbusters.org.

A LAST-MINUTE BREAKTHROUGH occurred at the World Trade Organization meeting in Cancún, Mexico, in September: nothing happened. No deal was cut, no ground gained, no flesh-pressing photos arranged for posterity. Instead, a magnificent meltdown, beginning when Kenyan representative George Oduor Ong'wen stood up and announced a walkout by several poor nations. "It's over," he told reporters.

Globalization activists cheered. For once, the power players at the WTO were not the US and their rich playmates. Instead, it was the "group of 21" developing nations (known as the G21, despite a growing membership), led by Brazil, India and China. For them, the issue in Cancún – the *only* issue – was agriculture. Together, the G21 represents more than half the world's population and more than two thirds of its farmers.



DARREN HAUCK

After years of braying about commitment to "free trade," the US and Europe are finally on the defensive, their hypocrisies caught in the limelight. According to former World Bank chief economist Joseph Stiglitz, for example, the US government has, since 1994, more than doubled the handouts it gives to its farmers. Sales of America's subsidized cotton translated into a $1-billion loss for sub-Saharan cotton growers in some of Africa's poorest nations. At the same time, the US has insisted that developing nations cancel their own subsidies and open their borders to American products.

The rich world's idea of a level playing field has never been so transparent. Even World Bank officials are now arguing that the first world must stop suppressing the one area of trade – agriculture – in which the third world has an advantage. But the Europeans and Americans still will not redress the imbalance. Instead, they accuse the G21 of being obstructionist when its members refuse to allow rich-world investors more access to their markets in exchange for fair trade in agriculture.

"World trade negotiations will never be the same again," said Phil Bloomer of Oxfam, a humanitarian aid group. "On paper, this meeting has failed, but the new power of developing countries backed by campaigners around the world has made Cancún a turning point."

Of course, the richest nations on Earth aren't famous for rolling over. The next challenge for the G21 is maintaining unity as the first world abandons every pretense of global democracy. As the talks in Cancún collapsed, American trade representative Robert Zoellick noted that the US may choose to focus its dealmaking power on nation-by-nation trade deals – tipped heavily in its favor, of course – rather than messy global agreements. "The US has an agenda on multiple fronts," said Zoellick. "We're going to keep opening markets one way or another."

At least, though, it is increasingly difficult for the US to claim that its unilateral policy of "opening markets" is anything as rosy-sounding as "free trade." Even American conservatives are finally admitting to what they've always preferred to conceal: that their interest is American dominance, not a fair shake for the global poor.

"The great error that has dogged liberalism is the belief that peaceful trade can replace international strife. Instead, trade has always been a major component of strife," declared William R. Hawkins of the US Business and Industry Council in the wake of Cancún. "It is a game for the highest stakes."

James MacKinnon

America is getting serious about a controversial weapon of war: its own people's freedom of movement. Activists like Ryan Clancy – seen here in his Milwaukee, Wisconsin, record shop – face penalties of up to $10,000 or 12 years in jail for traveling to Iraq to act as human shields against US bombing. A second crackdown is targeting the 50,000-plus Americans who visit Cuba each year without US Treasury Department permission. The fine for seeing Fidel Castro's one-party system with your own eyes? Fifty-five thousand dollars.

IN MAY 2002, ACTIVIST AND FILMMAKER DEEDEE HALLECK shared a vision with a roomful of media and technology activists in Seattle's Independent Media Center. "What we really need is a national campaign around the media," she said. "We fought around sweatshops, we fought around the WTO, we fought around war and militarism. It's time to take seriously media itself as an issue, because it affects all the other issues."

That spring, the Bush administration's Federal Communications Commission (FCC) had begun making media policy decisions designed to transfer even more broadcasting power into the clutches of a handful of huge conglomerates. New FCC Chairman Michael Powell – the son of Colin Powell – was quickly making a name for himself through his incredibly disdainful comments about his agency's public interest responsibilities in the face of private industry.

The FCC's media ownership regulations were designed to protect the diversity of voices, competition and local accountability in the media. They proceed from a basic understanding: that the ownership of a media outlet often determines the range of viewpoints that can be expressed. The FCC's definition of how much market control is too much, however, has been sliding upwards since the presidency of Ronald Reagan. Several troubling trends have emerged, including the concentration of individual media outlets under the control of a cartel of firms, and increasing "convergence" as corporate owners cut costs by, for example, using a single news department to feed multiple broadcast stations and newspapers.

The FCC's new wave of media policy threatened to build on the 1996 Telecommunications Act, which had erased ownership limits in the radio industry and allowed companies like Clear Channel and Infinity to expand beyond anyone's expectations. Fears of what Clear Channel-style deregulation could mean for television, newspapers and other media prompted the first public demonstrations. In March 2002, the "Angels of the Public Interest" donned papier-mâché wings to protest outside the FCC's suburban headquarters in Washington, DC; the action caught the imagination of many across the country. Inspired, a small group of Seattle activists organized an autumn conference timed to shadow the annual convention of a powerful industry lobby, the National Association of Broadcasters.

Reclaim the Media's workshops and talks were attended by close to a thousand people doing work on media literacy, grassroots media production and policy reform. By coincidence, the conference was in full swing when Powell announced the FCC's "omnibus review" of all media ownership rules. Activists from Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, Media Alliance, Media Tank, the Prometheus Radio Project and other groups were able to meet on the spot to begin sketching a strategy to stop Powell's deregulatory scheme.

As the FCC review began, DC-based advocacy groups like the Consumers Union and the Center for Digital Democracy filed detailed reports to counter the industry-friendly research being released by the commission. With grassroots activists working hard to get public comments rolling in, the DC groups successfully petitioned the FCC to extend its comment period through the end of 2003.

Within the FCC itself, Democratic commissioners Michael Copps and Jonathan Adelstein sensed the rising public tide and called for public hearings on media ownership. Chairman Powell agreed to hold just one – in Richmond, Virginia, close enough to the national capital to guarantee the predominance of media industry lobbies. In response, Copps and Adelstein organized their own hearings around the country, a move that Powell derided as an unnecessary "whistlestop tour."

Again, the activist groups sprang into action. Copps and Adelstein's meetings generated plenty of heat, keeping the commissioners on stage for hours listening to impassioned testimonials about the value of diverse and local media. Emboldened by the public support for their dissident stance, both Copps and Adelstein became more outspoken critics of Powell's dogmatic rush toward deregulation. After the hearing in Seattle, Adelstein delivered a speech at a crowded rock venue, on a bill that also included a set from Chuck D's Fine Arts Militia. As he spoke, fired-up audience members emailed the FCC from computer terminals activists had set up in the lobby.

Neither Powell nor the big media were prepared for the overwhelming public opposition. On June 2, when the FCC finally moved to weaken or eliminate crucial media ownership rules, their decision instantly became the most unpopular one in the agency's history.

Up to that point, the corporate media had been remarkably quiet about the ownership issue – even as their parent corporations had lobbied fiercely in favor of deregulation. With the cat out of the bag, the networks and newspapers dutifully reported the relaxed ownership rules. But the tremendous public outcry had become part of the story. Copps told reporters that the FCC had heard from over a quarter of a million citizens opposed to deregulation. That was enough to grab the attention of Congress, and a number of overlapping attempts to repeal or repair parts of Powell's deregulatory blitz are now winding their way through the Senate and House.

The extent to which Congress will roll back the corporate-friendly policy changes remains undecided. The most pernicious amendments – such as lifting the ban on newspaper-broadcast cross-ownership – will likely remain intact. But the emergence of "media democracy" as a rallying point for widespread grassroots activism gives reason to hope that Powell's victory may be temporary.

Many want to go further. Academic Robert McChesney, a pioneering media critic, has proposed that long-term goals include the repeal of the 1996 Telecom Act. Meanwhile, media activism is taking forms ranging from independent media production to public education to race, class and gender-based critique. As McChesney points out, media democracy can only unfold within a larger social movement – the movement to rehabilitate democracy itself.

Jonathan Lawson is a co-founder and director of Reclaim the Media; his column Media Politics appears regularly in Tablet. *He can be reached at <jonathan@reclaimthemedia.org>.*

ON SCREEN, THE INTERNET REMAINS A handy virtual world of shops, gossip and instant global research. In the background, it's starting to look more like cable television with a nod to John Poindexter's panopticon dreams. The euphoria of the mid 1990s – when a new, anarchic communications system grafted itself onto the planet's telephone lines – belongs in a museum, beside the 56K modem and the Commodore 64. The *Wired* magazine ethos has fallen prey to spam, spyware and frivolous lawsuits. Nobody disputes the web's power to connect people, but its role as an electronic community where they can speak and act freely is gravely in doubt.

So how did we go from digital liberty to MSNBC in less than a decade? We didn't. The internet – the idea of it, anyway – is nearly 60 years old.

To anyone born after 1970 or so, how a handful of brilliant American scientists conjured a revolutionary new medium from the ruins of World War II is the stuff of folklore. In 1945, government engineer Vannevar Bush envisioned a desktop machine called "memex" that let users link data associatively, the way hypertext does now. This thread of human-computer symbiosis got picked up in the early '60s by psychologist J.C.R. Licklider, who floated the concept of a global computer network while working in the Pentagon's Advanced Research Projects Agency. By 1966 (at what had been renamed the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency), Lawrence Roberts was deep into planning the ARPA network. This ancestor of the web, called ARPANET, went online in 1969, growing rapidly (thanks to open-source code) from its original circuit of mainframes at four west coast universities in the US, to encircling the entire country by the late 1970s. Then the military pulled the plug on funding the kind of deep thinking required to put computers and the internet in the hands of ordinary people.

Before Washington turned off the taps, however, interactivity pioneer Doug Engelbart changed the world. The Stanford University computer scientist invented the graphical user interface we all use today. Astonishingly, he had demonstrated a prototype computer – complete with keyboard, mouse and on-screen windows – in 1968. At Xerox's Palo Alto Research Centre during the early '70s, Alan Kay and his colleagues drew on Engelbart's work to build "Alto," the first personal computer.

True to its anti-establishment nature, the internet slipped the bonds of the US military-industrial complex: it was CERN, the civilian European Organization for Nuclear Research, that put the world wide web online in 1991. Inventor Tim Berners-Lee pulled five decades of innovations together by giving PC users access to an immense store of knowledge they could easily manipulate with hypertext. That same year, Linus Torvalds released the Linux operating system; unlike Bill Gates, he gave the kernel code of Linux away for anyone to see. The internet looked somehow democratic and open.

Ideas travelled swiftly. Activists found an incomparable new way to organize. Email was touted as the great leveler, and pundits raised hopes for this online democracy. The world, it seemed, would be one nation, under code. Then greed set in. Our vast intellectual playground got paved over and renamed the information superhighway. The stock market wanted a

e. Hackers were no longer intrepid explorers who netimes threw a well-deserved wrench into the capitalist system. They were terrorists.

This is where we stand today: an internet open for business, but increasingly closed to free communication. Got a minute? Download a copy of *Spybot Search & Destroy* (www.safer-networking.org) and scan your hard drive. Chances are it'll turn up 80 or so data miners, dialers, browser hijackers and other uninvited guests secretly tracking your surfing habits and triggering a fusillade of pop-up ads – from a list of nearly 6,000 such programs. If the dimmest bulbs in corporate America can pull that kind of privacy invasion off, imagine what John Ashcroft and the spooks at Homeland Security have planned.

Lawrence Lessig, a Stanford law professor and author of *The Future of Ideas: The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World*, has issued dire warnings about what lies ahead. As a few media giants become the internet's gatekeepers, censorship rules and those egalitarian computer-age ideals are forgotten. He says the web may cease to be a forum for the "creative commons." In Lessig's view, the US government should encourage greater broadband competition by maintaining the basic structure of the internet, like it does with roads.

There is a counter-argument: despite clumsy attempts to control the flow of information, it has never been easier to make copies of your favorite movies and music. Programmers will also find increasingly sophisticated ways to guard our online privacy from corporate and government intrusion. But the fact remains that the open-source dreamers and democratic revolutionaries have been turned on the defensive. The next few years may decide whether the freewheeling spirit of the internet can rise again, or if it is simply for sale. Cable TV or memex: your choice.

Nick Rockel

LINING UP FOR LINUX.
Bill Gates isn't sleeping as well as he used to. Last fall, Britain joined Russia, China, India, South Korea and – gasp! – the United States in taking a hard look at replacing the Microsoft computers that run their public-sector systems with Linux-based PCs. Some German government offices have already switched from Microsoft's Windows to the open-source operating system, giving weight to Linux creator Linus Torvalds' claim that he'll crush the Seattle-based computing giant. Meanwhile, the effort to close the global "digital divide" is also coming down on the side of open-source computing. In Spain, the regional government of Andalucia has made a move that many other governments are expected to follow: by decree, they've required certain agencies to use free, open-source software.

802.11A, GOOD BUDDY.
In a recent interview with CNET, ex-Apple CEO John Sculley waxed optimistic about the future of wireless computing. Comparing it to CB radio (a commercial flop that nonetheless pointed the way to cell-phone technology), he painted the sky bright blue. "The beauty of Wi-Fi is nobody has to buy spectrum – it's public, open, available spectrum," Sculley said, forecasting rich innovation by tech startups. Haven't we heard that line somewhere before?

TRUE GRID.
The people who brought you the World Wide Web are planning something far more smashing. In 2007, European particle-physics lab CERN hopes to unveil the "Grid," a network of the swiftest supercomputers on the planet. If it succeeds, even a humble amateur scientist will be able to run atom-by-atom simulations of the Big Bang. The question that needs to be processed first: how many different ways can big business find to step in and ruin it for everybody else?

PATENTLY ABSURD.
Last September, the European Parliament tweaked the draft of its patent legislation to prevent the patenting of software algorithms and business methods like Amazon's one-click purchasing. Although nothing changes until 2005, observers are predicting war with patent-happy America. In one scenario by the business analysts at Gartner, Inc., the US will make it illegal for its citizens to engage in e-commerce across the Atlantic.

BAR-CODE INSURRECTION.
As you stroll supermarket aisles with a Corporate Fallout Detector in your hands, ethical consumption gets a whole lot easier. James Patten, a PhD candidate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Media Lab, has invented a portable bar-code scanning device that clicks excitedly when rolled across a product from a company with a dodgy background: imagine a Geiger counter placed over a chunk of uranium.

"It's really hard to make good purchasing decisions," says Patten, who built the box-shaped machine as a project for an art class. "With increasing globalization, it becomes more and more difficult to trace accountability to specific companies." For instance, some "good" frozen juice may come in a can that was made by a corporation known for paying slave wages or dumping chemicals into rivers.

To stock his detector with knowledge, Patten compiled a list of companies from bar-code databases on the Web. He then cross-referenced those names with two other online resources: Scorecard.org, a pollution database operated by the nonprofit group Environmental Defense; and the UK-based Ethical Consumer's Corporate Critic Database (www.ethicalconsumer.org), which contains stories of unscrupulous corporate behavior. From there, he ranked the companies, giving each a percentile score for social and environmental transgressions. A switch on the detector lets users flip between the two.

"As I was doing it I learned that a lot of the information you can gather . . . is pretty subjective," Patten concedes. "It's really hard to collect a bunch of data about a company and come up with an objective assessment."

Although it was never Patten's intention to turn the Corporate Fallout Detector itself into a consumer product, he says a lot of people have asked him to do just that. For now, he's planning to take the detector to local grocery stores and give it to people so he can film them shopping. For a video demonstration, visit <http://web.media.mit.edu/~jpatten/cfd/>.

Nick Rockel

'CONSUMERISM FOR BEGINNERS' BY CLAY BUTLER

Decades after anti-consumerism emerged as a radical response to the "free" market myth, the debate is shifting to the mainstream. On September 17, the British commission on sustainable development quietly released a historic report: a government document that reads like a mental environmental manifesto.

"We appear to be locked into current consumption trends by a combination of past choices, technology, economic incentives, institutions, our own psychology and the culture and social systems we inhabit," say the report's authors, environmental strategists Tim Jackson and Laurie Michaelis. At the root of the problem, however, is the lingering myth that consumption is they key to well-being, an idea the authors describe as "encoded in conventional economics and policy."

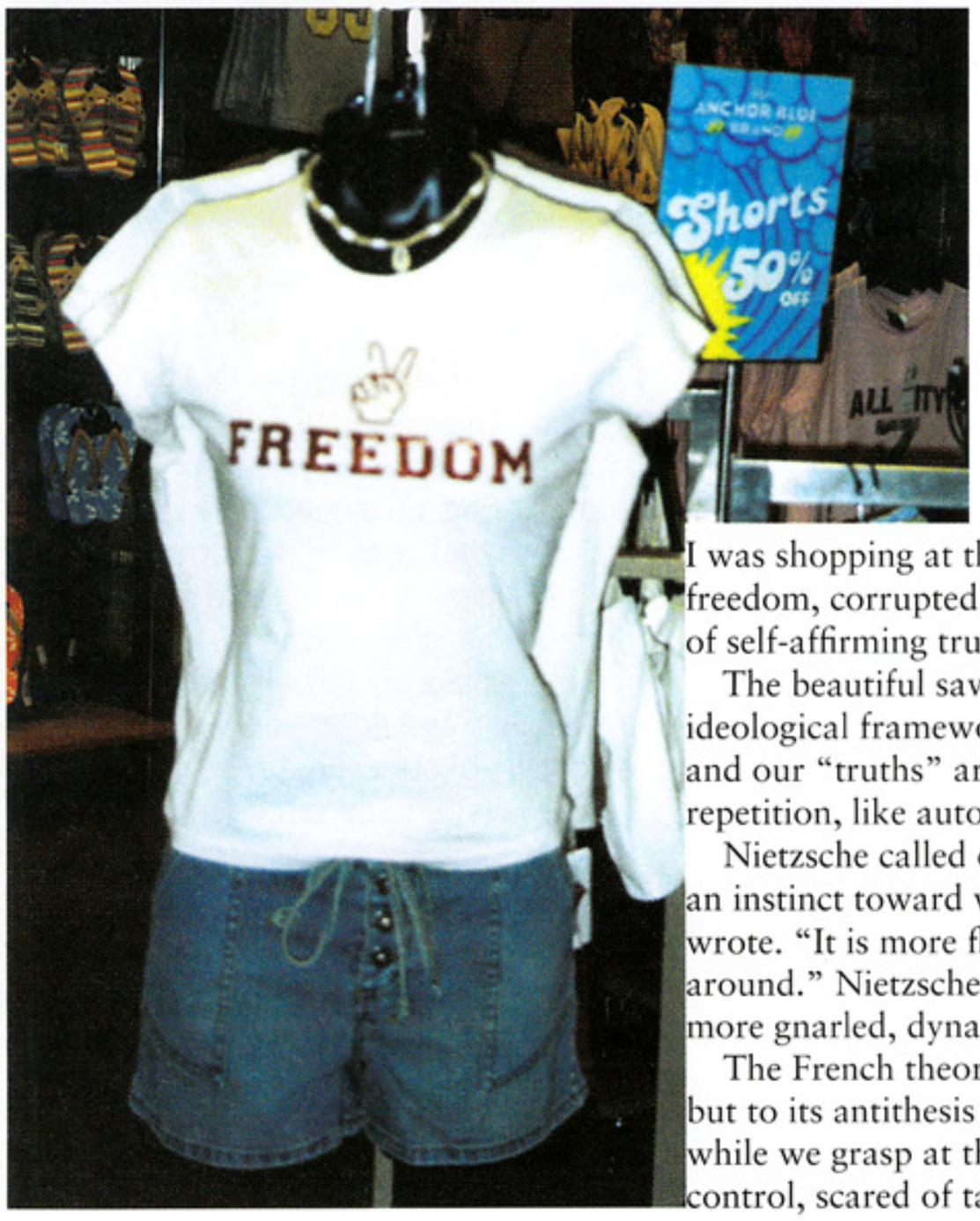
Governments have traditionally promoted shopping as freedom of choice – and the engine of the economy. Today, though, the link between consumption and a long list of environmental crises is impossible to ignore. So what explains governments' reluctance to tackle the shop-till-you-drop ethos? Most obviously, there is the money and power of the consumer capitalist system. Just as difficult, however, is the fact that countering consumerism requires a challenge to individuals "at the level of personal change." Anxious not to be seen as calling for a lower standard of living, politicians prefer to promise techno-fixes to make a super-size trip to the mall "sustainable."

"That environmental damage is a side effect from a failed attempt to improve human well-being is potentially tragic," the commission declares. Quality of life, in fact, is one of the victims. "A growing number of studies show that people in industrialized countries do not feel any more happy or satisfied as average income grows beyond the level to meet basic physical needs," the commission reports. Meanwhile, the social cost of spending beyond those needs gets steeper all the time: epidemic debt, depression, anxiety and overwork.

The commission recommends policy changes ranging from public relations campaigns to changing the idea of citizenship as it's taught in schools. Getting to the root of overconsumption, though, "would involve questioning fundamental assumptions about the way modern society functions."

With no reaction so far from the British government, the anti-consumer movement is still on the outside looking in. "This is practically a taboo area for government and policymakers because the economy is based on getting people to consume more, but that simply cannot go on," said Jonathon Porritt, the commission's chairman. "The social and environmental impact of over-consumption will overwhelm the benefit. We feel it is cowardly of policymakers not to confront this central question." But the world will have to wait – the cowards are busy making war.

James MacKinnon



I was shopping at the mall the other day when I saw this shirt: the American idea of freedom, corrupted. Freedom has become the right to consume and possess, a system of self-affirming truth. I buy to prove my "freedom."

The beautiful savagery of our lives has been robbed from us. We're sucked into ideological frameworks where our identity is packaged, our dreams fabricated and our "truths" are bought and sold. We consent to this absurdity with endless repetition, like automatons.

Nietzsche called our need to exist in a world of absolutes "the will to truth" – an instinct toward weakness. "It is more comfortable to obey than to examine," he wrote. "It is more flattering to think 'I possess the truth' than to see the darkness all around." Nietzsche believed that truth grows outward, threading new lines, becoming more gnarled, dynamic and changeable. You can't hold it, not even for a second.

The French theorist Georges Bataille links freedom not to the luxury of comfort but to its antithesis – the risk of losing something beyond your control. And all the while we grasp at these old ideas, scared of thinking for ourselves, scared of losing control, scared of tasting actual freedom.

JENNIFER DAWSON
Portland, Oregon

FROM THE HANGING GARDENS OF BABYLON TO THE introduction of gardens aboard the MIR space station, humankind has always looked to nature to calm our stresses and heal our inner wounds. Only now, however, are researchers finally solving the mysteries of how and why.

A pioneer in the field is Roger Ulrich, a professor of landscape and architecture at Texas A&M University. After studies that included a comparison of the brain-wave patterns of people shown scenes of vegetation, water and urban life, Ulrich theorizes that the combined sense of alertness and calm that nature provides likely gave our ancestors "a survival benefit" after stressful events like hunting or attacks by wild animals. If so, nature could provide a similar antidote today.

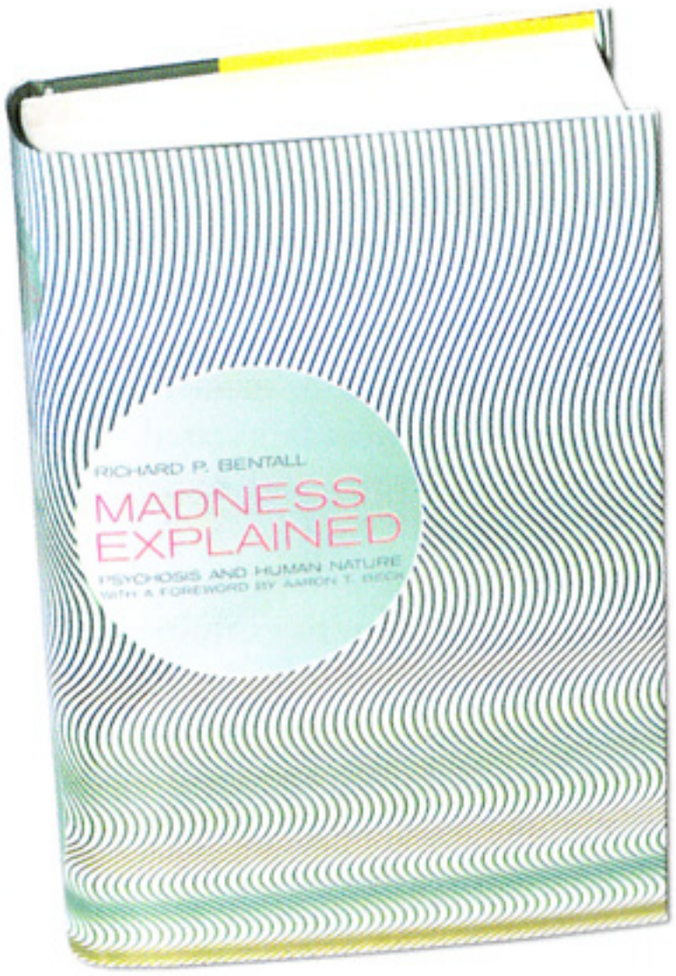
Until recently, theories like Ulrich's were difficult to support with hard numbers. Even as "horticulture therapy" has become popular for the treatment of ailments like Alzheimer's disease and other restrictive disabilities, the proof of its benefits has been largely anecdotal. ("Gardening, more than most rehab activities, has the ability to be very distracting," notes Teresia Hazen, a manager of horticulture therapy for Legacy Health Systems in Portland, Oregon.) But a growing body of research now supports this common sense.

In June, the *Journal of Environmental Psychology* published a finding that people exposed to nature after stressful events – for example, driving through heavy traffic – returned to normal blood pressure and an improved mood more quickly than those who had no natural contact. Further, the positive effects could be measured within minutes of exposure. The study, by the University of California at Irvine, also found that hospitalized patients whose windows looked out onto natural landscapes recovered from surgery more quickly than those who didn't have such views.

To Ulrich, the evidence now suggests that humans are hard-wired not only to enjoy the pleasant surroundings of nature, but to actually exploit them like a drug to relax and refresh ourselves. If so, today's urban environment – with its rare traces of a wilder kingdom – is steeping us all in collective withdrawal.

"If a researcher had seriously proposed two decades ago that gardens could improve medical outcomes, the position would have been met with skepticism by most behavioral scientists, and with derision by most physicians," Ulrich says. "We now have studies showing that psychological and environmental factors can affect physiological systems and health status." In this hyperactive age, the last laugh seems to go to the tree huggers.

Timothy Querengesser



It was a bitter pill that clinical psychologist Richard Bentall had to swallow – but then, it was he who chose to swallow it. As a formal experiment, Bentall and several colleagues took a low dose of the anti-psychotic droperidol, a drug given to the so-called mentally ill. The researchers had such strong negative reactions to the drug that much of the study had to be canceled. Bentall didn't have the most extreme reaction, but the effect was nevertheless disturbing: among other difficulties, he found it impossible to complete a psych test that he himself had designed. "I could as soon have climbed Mount Everest," he says. "I felt a sense of depression and hopelessness but also an inner sense of restlessness and agitation." After later bursting into tears and weeping uncontrollably, Bentall had to be given an antidote to the drug.

The experience started Bentall thinking. One result: his 600-page book *Madness Explained*. With great flare, Bentall offers up a new understanding of madness that goes to the roots of us all: mental illness is not a whole other beast that we can label as disease and toss into the margins of society; instead, madness, like anxiety and depression, is an extension of our everyday selves – selves gone awry, perhaps, but not selves who lack the capacity for wellness, especially when respected as whole persons. In short, Bentall dishes out a hearty dose of mad pride to the psychiatric establishment, with the sophistication and depth to back it up.

Madness Explained, by Richard P. Bentall (Penguin, 2003).

I want to consider the possibility that every age has an extremely small fraction of people who go their own way without making a big production out of it: not Jean-Paul Sartre, but Boris Vian; not Goethe, but Heinrich von Kliest; not Martin Heidegger, but Ludwig Wittgenstein. These are bohemians with a small b, in other words; their work breaks with fixed forms, and it is often about the idea of breaking with fixed forms. Yet they don't try to elevate their iconoclasm into a movement, a new fixed form. In his book *Class*, Paul Fussell calls this group "Class X," but since this group, for the most part, has very little in common with Generation X, I am going to substitute the acronym NMI, the new monastic individual. NMIs, says Fussell, make up the class of people that belong to no class, have no membership in a hierarchy. They form a kind of "unmonied aristocracy," free of bosses, supervision, and what is typically called "work." They work very hard, in fact, but as they love their work and do it for its intrinsic interest, this work is not much different from play. In the context of contemporary American culture, such people are an anomaly, for they have no interest in the world of business success and mass consumerism. Their credo, if it could be formulated at all, most closely approximates a haiku by the seventeenth-century Japanese poet Basho:

Journeying through the world
To and fro, to and fro
Cultivating a small field.

Morris Berman

I once read about a man who believed himself to have a fish in his jaw. (The case was reported in *New Society*.) This fish moved about, and caused him a lot of discomfort. When he tried to tell people about the fish, they thought him 'crazy', which led to violent arguments. After he'd been hospitalised several times—with no effect on the fish—it was suggested that perhaps he shouldn't tell anyone. After all it was the quarrels that were getting him put away, rather than the delusion.

Once he'd agreed to keep his problem secret, he was able to lead a normal life. His sanity is like our sanity. We may not have a fish in our jaw, but we all have its equivalent.

ART CONTRIBUTORS

Florian Schwinge
Topographs 2001

Thomas Demand
Archiv (Archive), 1995
303 Gallery, New York

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Untitled, 2000
Courtesy Feature Inc.
New York

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Courtesy Rena
Bransten Gellery,
San Francisco

Manuel Séndon
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Estudos Fotograficos
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Simon Norfolk

Todd Eberle
Control Data 6600/I, 2000

Elinor Carucci
Oral Surgery, 2000

Igort
Drawn and Quarterly

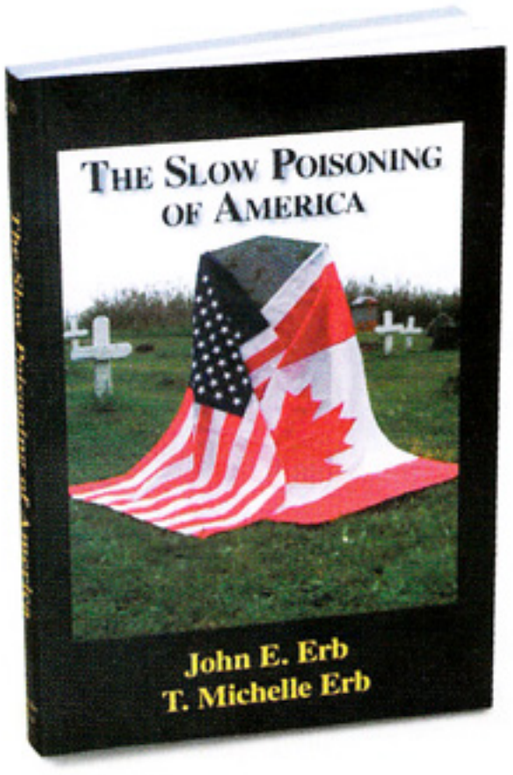
Beth Yarnelle Edwards

Willem van Genk
Tube Station
before 1986

Ashley Wood
from Popbot

Clay Butler

FROM *THE TWILIGHT OF AMERICAN CULTURE* (W.W. NORTON AND CO., 2001)
FROM *IMPRO*, KEITH JOHNSTONE (ROUTLEDGE, 1981)



Industrial food additives have crept into every corner of our food chain. In the process, these chemicals have had a Catch-22 effect on the public: we'd prefer not to consume them (a shot of Disodium EDTA or Red Dye #40, anyone?), but we believe in their necessity. Shaking out of this complacency will be painful, but the facts are clear: in our age of scientific and technological progress, our children are sicker than generations before. The reason is poisoning, according to John and Michelle Erb, who argue that both food companies and consumers are complicit. "A tasty and attractive product is good; one that can last on the shelves for months is better, and one that tastes gourmet using poor quality ingredients is the best of all," write the authors. Chemical additives support corporate profits all the down the production line, where kids take in the toxins every time we thoughtlessly open a package of luncheon meat or serve up a diet soda. Small daily doses add up, causing children's bodies to break down and succumb, in increasing numbers, to attention deficit disorder, asthma, juvenile diabetes, gastric intestinal disease, obesity, allergies and cancer.

The Slow Poisoning of America, by John E. Erb and T. Michelle Erb (Palladins Press, 2003).

BETH YARNELLE EDWARDS

'a powerful case,' 'a sober, factual case,' 'an overwhelming case,' 'a compelling case,' 'the strong, credible and persuasive case,' 'a

'Tis a gift to be simple, the old Shaker song says. The list of appliances I no longer have, never had or managed to destroy is long. I had a microwave; I killed it. I had a blender, but gave it away. The food chopper never worked and the huge food processor was quickly returned. No one ever gave me an electric can opener, the electric frying pan fried itself and I've never had an electric kettle. I don't own anything that plugs in to slice, dice, chop, mince, blend, make waffles, bake bread, brew espresso, deep-fry, grill or slow-cook. The lack of any desire to take small appliances apart and clean their sharp innards after every use motivates me, and so does the lack of space. I have a galley kitchen and a counter about as big as the paper currency from some countries.

Walking the small appliance aisles in department stores, I'm enchanted by the variety of small and not-so-small electric devices and surprised that I manage to cook without them. I wonder where people keep all the stuff. It seems some new houses have "appliance garages."

It takes inner resolve to resist, but I do. The 30-year-old hand-held electric mixer has seniority and waits humbly in a dark drawer. A sleek toaster is the only appliance on the counter. It's a shining chrome gem with rounded edges, made in the 1950s. It has a new electric cord. The only other small item is a red-and-white clock, also circa 1950, a souvenir from my grandmother's kitchen. It is neither digital nor programmable. It has a dial with large numbers and a sweep second hand, and it's all I need to mark the passage of time.

Diane Girard

ELINOR CARUCCI

in the end, if you're not careful, this is what happens to you
– you cry uncontrollably while watching a movie, but you
cannot cry in real life

Beggars, Calcutta, India, December 2001

REUTERS/JAYANTA SHAW

YESTERDAY I HAD AN ORIGINAL thought. It happened down by the water, at the bottom of the old logger's trail at the edge of Raystown Lake. Nothing spectacular or philosophical, but the thought was mine, something I'd never seen nor read before. It came unprompted by *Vanity Fair* or ads for Chevrolet, by MTV or Revolution 101.1 radio. It was simple and unbiased.

I can't describe the importance of this thought without first explaining that my mind is like a snow-globe full of media soundbites. When the chatter overwhelms me, I go down to the lake and run until my lungs and legs cramp. It's a daily battle to clear my head and get back to some smooth place to call my own. Lately, it feels like a marathon.

I think many things as I'm lunging up the trail: "Don't just fight wrinkles, fight gravity" (Neutrogena). "When it becomes clear that no one else shares your level of passion you are where you belong" (Rolex). "Bush Pens Poem" (CNN). "I called you last night at the hotel. Everyone knows but they won't tell" (Kid Rock and Sheryl Crow). "I am not an American who believes we should all have the same opinions" (ACLU). "Gap stretch – the pants of fall" (Gap). "Warning: You are almost out of space get extra storage" (Hotmail).

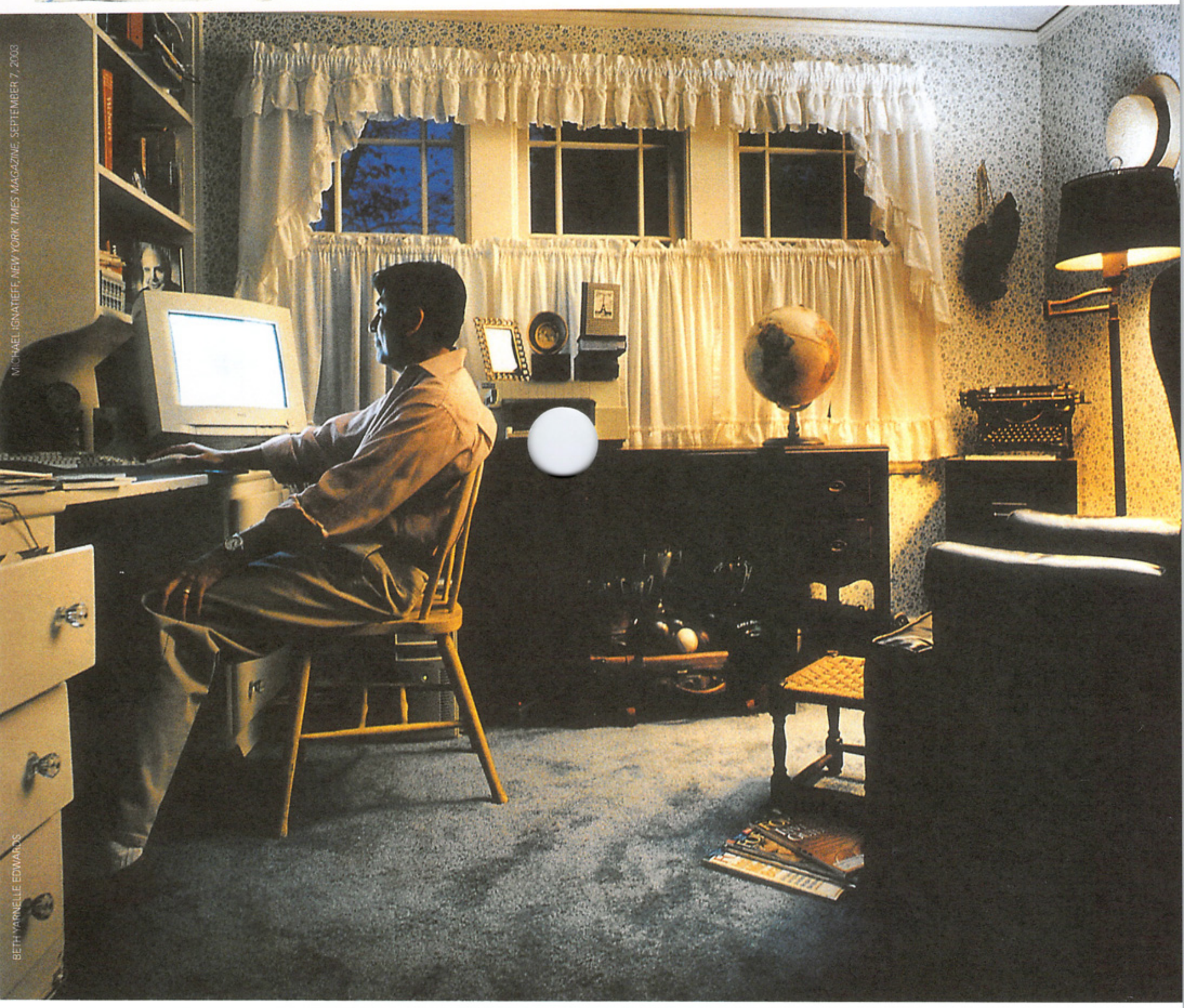
I flash back and forth between these clips, and many more. They aren't my thoughts, but I think them just the same: a collection of words and images that spin in my spastic rinse cycle. I churn them over and over, round and round, but I never seem to get the laundry done.

The evolution of fragmented thinking began with my generation, the one after the Baby Boomers but ahead of Generation X. We think a thought for a second, then move on to the next, then onward again, or maybe backward. Who can blame us? The advent of the television-cum-babysitter forced us to think in a new way, grabbing bits and pieces of very different ideas and images with almost no time for re-assembly. So began a pandemic of attention deficiency. Now we want our wars to end in three days because the concentration required to care beyond that is unimaginable. Who knows where it all started and where it will get back to and after all most of us miss the point of starting next before backward or is it forward? Are you still with me here?

Anyway, like I said before, I had this original thought. I was alone with my puppies, Soda Pop (*The Outsiders*) and Gilmore (*Happy Gilmore*), when my mind stopped churning and for one weird moment I was still. I saw a heron swoop across the lake and I felt my stomach dip with the swoop of this spectacular bird. It was instant and unregurgitated. It didn't make sense in any context but there with my dogs at the edge of the water. When the heron was gone I sat there and I thought, "*I want to fly,*" and that was the original thought that I had. I can't remember the last time that something like this happened.

Rebecca Noblit-Goodall

it was never simply a matter of preventing the use of weapons of mass destruction; rather, it was about consolidating American power in the Arab world.



The 100 Million March Against Empire
SATURDAY JULY 3, 2004

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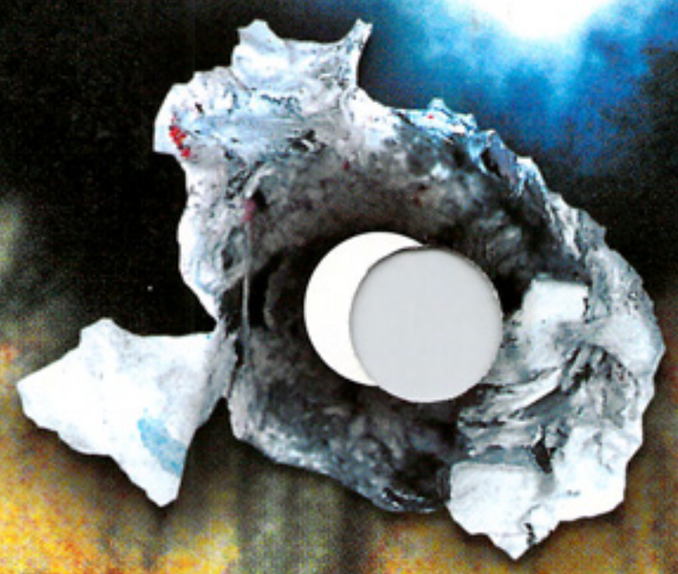

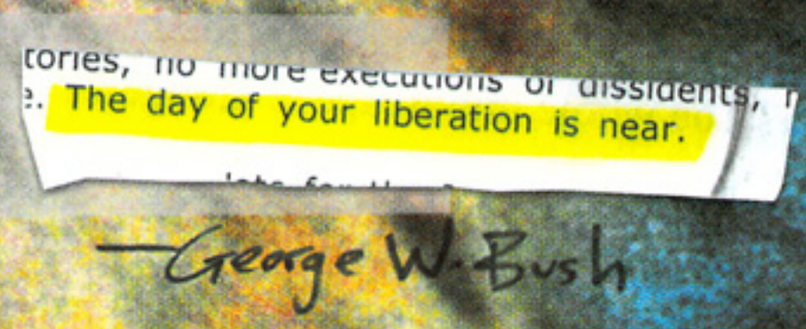

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